

Simone Luzzatto

# **Discourse on the State of the Jews**

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Bilingual Edition

Edited, translated, and commented by  
Giuseppe Veltri and Anna Lissa

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## Preface

In 1638, a small book of no more than 92 pages *in octavo* was published “*appresso Gioanne Calleoni*” under the title *Discourse on the State of the Jews and in particular those dwelling in the illustrious city of Venice*. It was dedicated to the Doge and his counsellors, who were labelled “lovers of Truth.” The author of the book was a certain Simone (Simḥa) Luzzatto, a native of Venice, where he lived and died, serving as rabbi for over fifty years during the course of the seventeenth century.

Luzzatto’s political thesis is simple and, at the same time, temerarious, if not revolutionary: Venice can put an end to its political decline, he argues, by offering the Jews a monopoly on overseas commercial activity. This plan is highly recommendable because the Jews are “well-suited for trade,” much more so than others (such as “foreigners,” for example). The rabbi opens his argument by recalling that trade and usury are the only occupations permitted to Jews. Within the confines of their historical situation, the Venetian Jews became particularly skilled at trade with partners from the Eastern Mediterranean countries. Luzzatto’s argument is that this talent could be put at the service of the Venetian government in order to maintain – or, more accurately, recover – its political importance as an intermediary between East and West. He was the first to define the role of the Jews on the basis of their economic and social functions, disregarding the classic categorisation of Judaism’s alleged privileged religious status in world history.

Nonetheless, going beyond the socio-economic arguments of the book, it is essential to point out Luzzatto’s resort to sceptical strategies in order to plead in defence of the Venetian Jews. In fact, he argues that the character of a single individual is unfathomable and that this is even more applicable if one tries to describe the character of a community formed of many individuals. It would therefore be against divine and human law to punish a whole community for the crimes committed by a few individuals. Therefore, the *Discourse* becomes a plea for tolerance in favour of an otherwise unprotected minority, a plea that enriches Luzzatto’s text and shows that he was very well-informed of the contemporary problems faced by Italy and Europe as a whole.

Funded by the German Research Council (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft), the university research team located firstly in Halle and now in Hamburg already presented the first results of their research with the first complete edition of Luzzatto’s Italian writings in 2013 and a book of essays on his thought in 2015. Based on the new Italian edition from 2013, the editors of the following translation have taken all previous translations into account. An English translation of some chapters of the book was undertaken by Felix Giovanelli in *Commentary* in 1947. A first incomplete English translation of the *Discorso* was submitted as a PhD by Rabbi Lester Walter Roubey in the same year (1947); a first unpublished attempt to translate the entire text was made by Dr Ariella Lang, Benjamin Ravid, and Giuseppe Veltri some years ago. Nonetheless, this is an original work. In fact, the editors are proud and

happy to present here the first complete English version of the *Discourse* with a commentary, glossary, index, and bibliography, as well as some essays on Luzzatto's work and impact which the reader can find at the end of the book.

We are especially grateful to Benjamin Ravid for his essay that contributes to give a historical context to Luzzatto's works and thought. Finally, we cannot end this preface without thanking Katharine Handel, who was responsible for the language and copy-editing of the book, Ariella Lang for her interest and engagement in our research, Dr Rachel Aumiller for having followed the editorial process of the book, and finally Dr Michela Torbidoni for her long-standing contribution to the project. We are indebted to Dr Albrecht Döhnert, editorial director of the Walter De Gruyter publishing house, for his support and Dr Sophie Wagenhofer, acquisitions editor at De Gruyter, for her helpful advice in all matters of production. Our special thanks are due to our colleagues and the fellows of the Maimonides Centre, among them Professor David Ruderman, Professor Paolo Bernardini, and Professor Diego Lucci, for reading and discussing excerpts of the book and suggesting several improvements.

May this translation alongside the Italian original stimulate new research on the ghetto of Venice. As Simone Luzzatto put it, although the Jews were notoriously in a state of subjection, they applied themselves to study, and it was this application which demonstrated their skill and industry. This was possible because of the protection of their rulers, as Luzzatto sustains (*Discourse*, 85v):

Certainly, the Jews, finding themselves in their present state of subjection and having no freedom whatsoever apart from applying their minds to study and doctrine, should devote themselves to these with all their skill and industry. They should be aware of the fact that the unity of dogmas, the patronage granted by the princes, and the protection from so much oppression were obtained over such a long period of time, humanly speaking, from the learning of a virtuous few. They acquired credibility and authority under those who ruled, since they were deprived of all other means of aspiring to the favours and graces of the great in any other way. [The Jews] should [therefore] rest assured that if they were to lack appreciation deriving from their command of [liberal] letters and the esteem of the virtuous, they would incur a considerable decline and a more despicable oppression than they have ever endured in the past.

Luzzatto's description of the Jewish ghetto as a source of cultural unity ("study and doctrine") in the midst of the Christian society is a novelty in the landscape of Jewish self-definition. Yet in Italy, Jews attempted to participate in the cultural life of their environment, dialoguing with it and contributing to its scientific, philosophical, literary, and theological discourse.

Hamburg and Paris, 15 March 2018

The editors

## Remarks

The documentation system mainly follows the *Chicago Manual of Style* (humanities style).

The transliteration of Hebrew words follows the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Second Edition, 2007).

The English translation of the Biblical quotes is taken from the Masoretic Text and the JPS 1917 Edition, 2005 Mechon Mamre: <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0.htm>, with some slight changes to make it more similar to Luzzatto's Latin translation. The Bible quotes without punctuation are taken from the same source: <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/i/t/k/k0.htm>.

The Latin translation of biblical passages was made by Luzzatto himself from the original Hebrew text. In the footnotes, we give the official translation of the Vulgata Clementina to allow the reader to compare it with Luzzatto's translation. The passages from the Vulgata Clementina are taken from *The Clementine Text Project* based on the *Editio Typica* published by the Typographus Vaticanus in 1598 under the title *Biblia Sacra Vulgatae editionis, Sixti V Pontificis Maximi jussu recognita et edita*, with additions by A. Colunga and L. Turrado (Madrid: La Editorial Católica, 1946): <http://vulsearch.sourceforge.net/html/>.

Unless otherwise indicated, the English translations of classical authors are taken from the Loeb Series, with the exception of Aristotle. *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*. 2 vols. Edited by Jonathan Barnes. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991; Plato. *Complete Works*. Edited by John M. Cooper. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing House, 1997.

Other standard reference editions are Francis Bacon, *The Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall*. Edited by Michael Kiernan. The Oxford Francis Bacon 15. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006; Francis Bacon, *The New Organon*. Edited by Lisa Jardine and Michael Silverthorne. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000; Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Chief Works and Others*. Translated by Allan Gilbert, 3 vols. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989; Galileo Galilei, *On the World Systems: A New Abridged Translation and Guide*. Edited by Maurice A. Finocchiaro. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997; Galileo Galilei, *Sidereus Nuncius or The Sidereal Messenger*. Translated by Albert Van Helden. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989; *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2nd edition, 2007); *The Encyclopedia of Islam*. 13 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1986; *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/>.

We have eventually corrected some minor faults in the Latin quotes from the *editio princeps* of the *Discourse*.

For this English edition of the *Discourse*, we have acknowledged the following previous partial translations:

- Giovanelli, Felix, ed. "Consideration XI." *Commentary* 4 (April 1947): 372–77.
- Giovanelli, Felix, ed. "Consideration XVI." *Commentary* 6 (June 1952): 589–93.

- Giovanelli, Felix, ed. “Consideration XVII and XVIII.” *Commentary* 5 (May 1947): 474–78.
- Lattes, Dante, ed. and trans. *Ma’amar ‘al yehude Veneṣiya: tirgem me-ha-maqor italqi Dan Lattes ‘im mevū’ot me’et Riccardo Bachi u-Moshe A. Shulvass*. Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1950–51.
- Roubey, Lester W. “The ‘Discorso circa il stato degli Hebrei’ (1638): Of the Italian Rabbi Simone (Simha ben Isaac) Luzzatto with an Introduction on the Life and Work of the Author.” Rabbinic thesis, Hebrew Union College, 1947.

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# D. I S C O R S O CIRCA IL STATO DE GL' HEBREI.

Et in particolar dimoranti nell'inclita Città di  
V E N E T I A,

D I S I M O N E  
L V Z Z A T T O  
Rabbino Hebreo,

*Et è vn' appendice al Trattato dell' openioni e Dogmi de  
gl' Hebrei dall' vniuersal non dissonanti, e de  
Riti loro più principali.*



IN VENETIA, M DC XXXVIII.

Appresso Gioanne Calleoni.  
*Con Licenza de' Superiori.*



**DISCORSO CIRCA IL STATO DEGLI HEBREI  
et in particolar dimoranti  
nell'inclita città di  
VENETIA**

DI SIMONE LUZZATTO

rabbino hebreo

*Et è un'appendice al trattato dell'openioni e dogmi degli Hebrei dall'universal  
non dissonanti, e de riti loro più principali*

In Venetia, MDCXXXVIII

Appresso Gioanne Calleari

Con licenza de' Superiori

**DISCOURSE ON THE STATE OF THE JEWS  
and in particular those dwelling  
in the illustrious city of  
VENICE**

by Simone Luzzatto,

rabbi

*That is, an appendix to the treatise about the opinions and dogmas of the Jews,  
which are not dissonant from the universal, and about their most important rites*

In Venice, MDCXXXVIII

At Gioanne Calleoni's

With the permission of the Superiori

## ALLI AMATORI DELLA VERITÀ

[3r] Non ho giudicato convenevole, che maggior patrocínio dovesse ottenir abbozzato ritratto di quello non ha potuto giamai per lungo tratto di tempo conseguire il suo originario. Priva di spetiale protettore, vaga e dispersa è la natione hebrea, e parimente senza particolare appoggio a cui sia raccomandato, il presente discorso alla luce del mondo ho avventurato, ardisco negletto, et inadobbato di ornata dicitura inviarlo alla vostra nobil presenza essendo conscio quanto è gradita la semplicità alli cultori dell'invita verità, alla quale anco l'istessa nudità l'arrecca sommo diletto e piacere. Non pretendo da voi [3v] indebito favore, et estorto applauso, conoscendo quanto n'è indegno et immeritevole, ma sì bene candido e retto giuditio per cui egli vi ragiona.

E se lice paragonare le cose minime et oscure alle grandi et illustri, ne concepisco speme d'alcun prospero avvenimento, ché s'il pargoletto Moise che riuscì poi celebre legislatore, esposto dalla genitrice alla corrente del fiume Nilo, avvenendosi nella figliola del nemico e tiranno re Faraone, compassionando il fanciulesco vagito, estrahendolo dall'eminente sommersione, liberalmente lo fece educare nella casa regia, chi sa che non affatto dissimile successo sia per occorrere a questo recente parto e derelita prole, tuttavia sotto il benignissimo e clementissimo cielo venetiano nata, ch'incontrandosi in alcun di quelli nobilissimi eroi de quali l'inclita città tanto n'abbonda, precipi non solo per nascita, ma molto più per l'ornamento de regie virtù, sia benignamente raccolta e ricovrata, e forse con favorevole protezione da rigorose censure de più severi, et austeri giudici, se non propugnata, almeno escusata.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> La pagina 4r-v, omessa nell'edizione di Saletta, contiene la tavola ovvero indice dell'opera. L'autore aggiunge in calce dopo la tavola: "È la stampa sovente per molte cause, feconda d'inavvertenze le quali tutte sono concorse nella presente impressione. Però s'implora la benignità del discreto lettore, che usi in ciò placida connivenza e facil indulgenza."

## TO THE LOVERS OF TRUTH

[3r] I have thought it improper that an inaccurate portrait should obtain greater patronage than the original ever achieved over a long period of time. The Jewish Nation, bereft of special protection, is itinerant and dispersed, and in like manner, I ventured to expose the present discourse to the light of the world without any special support willing to recommend it. Hence, I dare to bring this work, neglected and stripped of ornate diction, to your noble attention,<sup>1</sup> while indeed being aware that lovers of reluctant Truth<sup>2</sup> appreciate simplicity. For [this reluctant truth] takes the greatest delight in [its] very nakedness.<sup>3</sup> I do not claim [3v] undeserved favour from you, nor extorted applause, as I recognise how unworthy and unmerited it would be; but I plead for the most candid and honest judgment of the issues discussed.

And if it is permitted to compare small and obscure things to those which are great and illustrious, I hope that the outcome will somehow be fortunate. It happened once that the small child Moses, who later became a celebrated legislator, although he had been exposed by his mother to the currents of the River Nile, happened to meet the daughter of his tyrannical enemy, King Pharaoh. [The lady] pitied the wailing baby, saving him from imminent drowning in the river, and had him liberally educated in the royal palace.<sup>4</sup> Who knows if nowadays the *Discourse*, my recent delivery and forsaken offspring, but nonetheless born under the kindest and most merciful Venetian sky, will not share this very same outcome by meeting with some of those most noble heroes with which this illustrious city abounds – princes not only by birth but also (and foremost) because of their display of royal virtues? May they benignly welcome and shelter [this text]. And may it find favourable protection from the rigorous censorship of the harshest and strictest judges – if this is not advocated, at least let it be excused.

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1 Addressed to the doge of Venice, Francesco Erizzo (1631–46) and his *consiglio*. See also Machiavelli, *The Prince*, “Niccolò Machiavelli to the Magnificent Lorenzo de’ Medici,” vol. I, 10: “This work of mine I have not adorned or loaded down with swelling phrases or with bombastic and magnificent words or any kind of meretricious charm or extrinsic ornament, with which many writers dress up their products.” In Luzzatto’s times, many Venetian editions of *The Prince* were available. The most relevant have been printed in Venice: Figliuoli d’Aldo, 1540, ristampata nella Officina Aldina nel 1546; Comin da Trino, 1541; Giolito, 1550; Domenico Giglio, 1550.

2 For the concept of reluctant truth and its Aristotelian source, see Giuseppe Veltri, *Renaissance Philosophy in Jewish Garb: Foundations and Challenges in Judaism on the Eve of Modernity* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 224–25, and annexed bibliography.

3 A similar parallel appears in Francis Bacon, *The New Organon*, 14: “For a naked mind is the companion of innocence and simplicity, as once upon a time the naked body was.”

4 On the infancy of Moses, see Exodus 2:1–10.

## PREFATONE DI TUTTA L'OPERA

[5r] La natione hebrea altro tanto che nelli secoli passati fu celebre, e preclara per humane prosperità, e divini favori, hor'è conosciuta sì per l'incontro de sciagure, come per la continuata, e costante tolleranza in esse, fra quali non è la minore, il mancamento di quelle dotrine, et eruditioni, che le sarebbono state necessarie per esporre, e manifestare se stessa al sincero giuditio de più prudenti, con recidere, e troncarli quelli freggi d'infamia, e mendacità, che la conditione de tempi, e la irruzione de più volgari le ha intessuto.

Per il che con quel minimo di talento mi ha concesso la Divina Maestà, mi son proposto nell'animo<sup>2</sup> formare compendioso ma verace racconto<sup>3</sup> de suoi ritti principali, et opinioni più comuni dall'universale non dissonanti, e discrepanti, nella quale applicatione ho procurato con ogni mio potere, benché io sia della istessa natione, astenermi da qualunque affetto, e passione che dal vero deviare mi potesse. Così spero incontrare discreto lettore, che vacuo d'ogni anticipato, e preoccupato giuditio non sia per seguire il volgare costume, di solo approbare, e sentir bene [5v] de avventurati, e felici, e sempre dannare li abbattutti, et afflitti, ma con retto giuditio sarà per billanciare quello in tal proposito mi ha dettato la mia imperfetione.

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<sup>2</sup> Mi son...animo: "Havendomi proposto nell'animo," così inizia il manoscritto del *Discorso* (Venezia, Biblioteca Marciana, It. VI 278, n. 7 (5882), fols. 101-119, fols. 104v-107v assenti. Legato Nobile Girolamo Contarini (1843), sulla costa "Relazioni di vari Prencipi," citato come "Ms.B.M."), di cui si riportano le variazioni di rilievo rispetto all'edizione stampata del 1638 (Roma, Biblioteca Angelica, C.768\1). Ms.B.M., 102r.

<sup>3</sup> Compendioso...racconto: nel manoscritto: "compendioso racconto et raguaglio dell'openioni," Ms.B.M., ibid.

## PREFACE TO THE ENTIRE WORK

[5r] The Jewish Nation has been as famous and illustrious in past centuries for human prosperity and divine favour as it is nowadays known both for suffering disasters and for its continued and constant endurance. Among the greatest afflictions is the absence of the doctrines and eruditions that would have been necessary to expose this Nation to the sincere judgment of the most prudent individuals. In doing so, the Nation would have been able to erase those embroideries of untruthful infamy which the conditions of the times and the contempt of the most vulgar individuals have woven around it.

Therefore, with the smallest amount of talent that the Divine Majesty has granted me, I brought myself to compose a concise but truthful account of this Nation's principal rites and most commonly shared opinions, which are not in conflict with those that are universal. In performing this task, I tried with all my might, even though I belong to the same Nation, to abstain from any sympathy or passion that could make me deviate from the truth. Thus, I hope to meet the minds of my discerning readers,<sup>5</sup> who, free from any prejudice or troubled judgment, are not willing to follow the vulgar custom of only approving and favouring [5v] happy and fortunate individuals, and always damning the abased and afflicted. Rather, with upright judgment, they will want to make a balanced evaluation of the words my imperfection has dictated to me.

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<sup>5</sup> Rhetorical term to address the reader; Galileo Galilei used it in his preface to the *Dialogue on the World Systems*, "To the Discerning Reader." Galilei, *On the World Systems*, 79.

Tralasciarò il considerare a lungo<sup>4</sup> l'antichità della stirpe, il non mescolato sangue per sì lungo tratto di tempo conservato, la tenacità de ritti e credenza, la inflessibilità<sup>5</sup> nelle oppressioni, solo aggiungerò al detto mio proponimento<sup>6</sup> la espositio-  
ne d'alcuni profitti, che la natione hebrea dimorante nella inclita città di Venetia<sup>7</sup> l'apporta, non havendo in ciò fine di rappresentare ad altrui ambizioso apparato di utili, et emolumenti, ma solo dimostrare non esser detta natione affatto inutil membro del comun popolo di detta città. Onde restarano li men versati delli affari del mondo in parte raguagliati quali siano li veri motivi, et impulsì, che dispongono Republica prudentissima, e giustissima a concedere, et admettere alla natione sicuro domicilio, e stanza in sì nobile emporio, et illustre città, e con paterna protettione dall'altrui insulti diffenderla, ché per tal avviso spero si renderanno li sudetti verso lei non solo men contumaci, ma di più ancor'alquanto placidi, et amicabili.

E se conforme la conditione dell'humana fragilità si sonno trovati nella natione alcuni facinososi, e scelerati,<sup>8</sup> non perciò deve restare oscurato, e **[6r]** delnigrato il candido affetto,<sup>9</sup> che l'universale delli Hebrei tiene verso il suo Clementissimo Principe, né anco devesi temere, e dubitare, che li sia perciò irritata, e fulminata contra la publica indignatione, poiché ancor ben coltivato terreno insieme con la messe ben spesso produce herbe inutili, e nocive, né per tal causa l'avveduto agricoltore abbandona l'immoderato, e lusingante suolo, ma estirpando le mal nate piante, continua il suo faticoso lavoro in curare le buone, e perseverare le giovevoli.

E chi ha peritia delli humani avvenimenti abbastanza è informato, che la qualità del male molto più che del bene è sensibile, essendo quello un deviamiento, e disregolamento dell'ordine, e norma consueta, che d'ognuno si conosce, e questo un continuato progresso conforme alla serie delle cose di già costituita, ch'appena da più saggi si osserva. L'infermità cagionata dall'intemperie, et alteratione subito assalitoci ci perturba, il bene della sanità con il discorso<sup>10</sup> solo si comprende, e con paragone<sup>11</sup> del suo contrario. Coloro che navigano a seconda, e perciò con gran celerità viaggiano non s'accorgono del loro veloce moto, ma occorrendoli poca restia, e lieve impedimento, subito si risentono dall'agitazione, e squasso.

Così d'alcuni, li delitti de pochi di questa **[6v]** natione sono esageratti, com'intollerabili sciagure, et insopportabili calamità, ma li ordinari comodi, e proffitti, che

<sup>4</sup> Tralasciarò...lungo: nel manoscritto "tralascierò ad altrui l'admirare," Ms.B.M., ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Credenza...inflessibilità: nel manoscritto dopo "credenza," "la tolleranza nelli travagli," Ms.B.M., ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Proponimento: nel manoscritto dopo "proponimento," "come apendice," Ms.B.M., 102v.

<sup>7</sup> Venetia: nel manoscritto dopo "Venetia," "ricoverandosi sotto li felici auspicii della Serenissima Repubblica," Ms.B.M., ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Scelerati: nel manoscritto dopo "scelerati," "che hanno commesso alcune enormi attioni," Ms.B.M., 103r.

<sup>9</sup> Affetto: nel manoscritto dopo "affetto," "et riverente ossequio," Ms.B.M., ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Discorso: nel manoscritto "mente," Ms.B.M., 103v.

<sup>11</sup> Paragone: nel manoscritto "la comprobazione," Ms.B.M., ibid.

I will dwell no longer on this ancestry, on its unmixed blood, which has existed for such a long period of time, on the persistence of its rites and beliefs, or on its unyielding endurance during times of oppression.<sup>6</sup> I will merely add an exposition concerning some of the profits that the Jewish Nation living in the illustrious city of Venice has brought to [that city]. With this, I do not intend to offer any ambitious estimate of profits and gains; rather I only wish to demonstrate that this Nation is anything but a useless part of the general population of this city. And thus, even those least experienced in worldly affairs will be partially informed about the true motives and impulses that make this extremely prudent and just Republic inclined to yield and provide a protected residence and shelter for the [Jewish] Nation in such a noble and illustrious city of trade. [The Republic] will likewise protect it like a father from the insults of others. With this knowledge, I hope that the above-mentioned [least experienced people in worldly affairs] will become less hostile and even more amicable and peaceable towards the Jewish Nation.

And if, giving way to the human condition of fragility, some rebels and criminals are found within this [Jewish] Nation, this should not obscure or [6r] denigrate the unstained affection that all the Jews maintain towards their most merciful prince. It need not be feared that this will raise public indignation against them. For just as a well-cultivated terrain often produces useless and harmful herbs along with the harvest, a wise farmer does not abandon the intemperate and thriving soil for this single reason, but uproots the harmful plants and continues with the tiring work of tending to the good plants, and keeping the useful ones alive.

Those who have a good knowledge of human events know that the quality of evil is much more perceptible than the quality of good. The former is a deviation from and disturbance of order, and a departure from habitual, well-known rules, while the latter is in continual progress and conforms to a series of already established issues, which even the wisest men are seldom able to observe. A disease induced by inclement or changing weather immediately unsettles us upon assault. The asset of good health, on the other hand, can only be grasped with the help of reasoning and by comparing it with its opposite. Similarly, those who navigate downstream<sup>7</sup> – and therefore with great swiftness – travel without noticing their speedy movement, but when they meet with a slightly billowy sea and small impediments, they are immediately affected by perturbation and concussion.

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6 A possible allusion to Josephus Flavius, *Against Apion*, I:1: “I have, I think, made sufficiently clear to any who may peruse that work [*The Jewish Antiquities*] the extreme purity of our Jewish race, the purity of the original stock.”

7 Dante, *Purgatory*, trans. John D. Sinclair (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), canto IV, lines 92–93: “That going up will be as easy for thee as going downstream in a boat.”



da lei ne derrivano, come cose insensibili, et ignote sonno trapassatte, e trascuratte, per il che non restarà aggravato il prudente lettore se alquanto in questa parte mi dilatarò come la meno praticata, et osservata. E se coroso fragmento d'invecchiata statua, perché da Fidia overo Lisippo fusse stata elaborata appresso il curioso antiquario sarebbe d'alcun prezzo, così non dovrebbe affatto essere abborita la reliquia dell'antico popolo hebreo, benché da travagli difformata, e dalla lunga captività deturpata, poiché per comune consenso degli huomini già una volta esso popolo da Sommo Opefice prese forma di governo, et institutione di vita.

Thus, the crimes of a few people of this [6v] Nation are exaggerated by some people as intolerable misfortunes and unbearable calamities; and, in contrast, the continuous advantages and profits offered by this Nation are overlooked, ignored, and neglected as if they were flimsy, imperceptible things. For this reason, the prudent reader will not feel encumbered when I expand this last section, for [these advantages and profits] are the least well-known and most unobserved. A deteriorated fragment of an aged statue would be worth a respectable amount of money in the eyes of a curious antiques dealer if either Phidias or Lysippus had sculpted it.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the relic of the ancient Jewish People should not be depreciated, even though it is deformed and disfigured from distress and a long period of captivity. Moreover, it is a common consensus among men that this People once took [its] form of government and institution of life from the Supreme Opifex.

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<sup>8</sup> The same comparison appears in Machiavelli's *Discourses*, "Preface," vol. I, 190: "When I consider, then, how much respect is given to antiquity and how many examples (to pass over countless examples) a fragment of an antique statue has been bought at a high price in order that the buyer may have it near him." See Veltri, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 203 n. 18. The same comparison is also used by Galileo Galilei in his *Sidereus Nuncius* (1610); Galilei, *Sidereal Messenger*, 29: "A most excellent and kind service has been performed by those who defend from envy the great deeds of excellent men and have taken it upon themselves to preserve from oblivion and ruin names deserving of immortality. Because of this, images sculpted in marble or cast in bronze are passed down for the memory of posterity; because of this, too, the cost of columns and pyramids, as the poet says, rises to the stars." The poet Galilei is referring to is Sextus Propertius.

## INTRODUTIONE A QUESTO TRATATTO

[7r] Che li Hebrei arrecano alcun considerabile emolumento all'inclita città di Venetia, e che parimente si possono connumerare fra le portioni integranti del comun popolo di lei, stimarei non fusse propositione sì temeraria, e disonante, che offender potesse il delicato sentimento delli animi ancor scropolosissimi.

Mentre si trova che li Stoici fra gli antichi filosofi famosi, ardirono affermare il Sole, la Luna, e l'altre stelle, pascersi, e nutrirsi da vapor di questo nostro basso globo terreno, così Democrito, e Leucippo osarno dire, che il mondo così grande, et ornato, havesse per elementi, che lo compongono particelli indivisibili, et insensibili, e sebbene fu opinione dannata, ciò li avvenne più per il casuale accoppiamento di quelli corpicelli asserto da quelli filosofi, che per l'absurdità della costruzione. Così sia lecito, e permesso alla natione hebrea paragonarsi alli atomi di Democrito in presumersi particella di sì numerosa populatione, et ad una tenue, e terrestre esalatione, che concorre a prestare tributo, et alimento alla sublimità del publico erario.

Li regni sono simili alla [7v] Via Latea celeste, che apparisce a nostri occhi per un concorso di minutissime stelle ognuna di loro <e> per se stessa a noi invisibile, che però unite formano un gran tratto di luce, e fulgore, così li gran imperii risultano dalle minutie di diverse populationi.

## INTRODUCTION TO THIS TREATISE

[7r] I would judge it neither a bold nor a dissonant proposition to say that the Jews have offered some considerable profit to the illustrious city of Venice. Likewise, the proposition that they should be considered part and parcel of the city's common population should not be offensive to the delicate sentiment of even the most scrupulous of souls.

While the Stoics, renowned among ancient philosophers, dared to declare that the sun, the moon, and the other stars nourish and feed themselves from the vapour of our low, earthly sphere,<sup>9</sup> in the same way Democritus and Leucippus<sup>10</sup> ventured to say that this great and ornate world has indivisible and impassive particles among the elements that compose it.<sup>11</sup> This opinion was condemned, but because the two philosophers asserted the casual coupling of small bodies, not because of the absurdity of the conception.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, the Jewish Nation should be allowed to compare itself to Democritus's atoms in representing one particle of a very numerous population, and to a tenuous and earthly exhalation that contributes to paying tribute and maintaining public revenue.

Different kingdoms are like [7v] the celestial Milky Way, which to our eyes appears as a conglomeration of the smallest of stars, each of which is in and of itself invisible to the eye, but which when united form a great stretch of light and brightness.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, great empires are made of the smallest elements of different populations.

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9 It is possible that Luzzatto took his reference from Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, "Zeno" VII:1, 145: "These fiery bodies and the stars generally derive their nutriment, the sun from the wide ocean, being a fiery kindling, though intelligent: the moon from fresh waters, with an admixture of air, close to the earth as it is: thus Posidonius in the sixth book of his *Physics*; the heavenly bodies being nourished from the earth." On the reception of Stoic philosophy in the seventeenth century, see Pierre-François Moreau, ed., *Le stoïcisme au XVIe et au XVIIe siècle: le retour des philosophies antiques à l'âge classique* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1999).

10 See glossary.

11 It is possible that Luzzatto took his reference from Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, "Heraclitus" IX:1, 44: "The atoms [...] generate all composite things – fire, water, air, earth; for even these are conglomerations of given atoms. And it is because of their solidity that these atoms are impassive and unalterable." Another possible source is Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption* I:1 (314a22–24): "Democritus and Leucippus say that there are indivisible bodies, infinite both in number and in the varieties of their shapes, of which everything else is composed."

12 Luzzatto seems to be referring to the criticism of the atomistic theory.

13 The author is recalling Galileo's discoveries by means of the telescope as made public in *Siderius Nuncius*: "For the galaxy is nothing else than a congeries of innumerable stars distributed in clusters. To whatever region of if you direct your spyglass, an immense number of stars immediately offer themselves to view, of which many appear rather large and very conspicuous but the multitude of small ones is truly unfathomable." *Sidereale Messenger*, 62. Luzzatto also refers to the astronomical progressions traced by the spyglass in his *Socrates or on Human Knowledge* (In Venetia: Appresso il Tomasini, 1651), 194–95, without mentioning it explicitly.

E non si può parimente negare, che l'affluenza di datii concorrenti al publico, solevare in gran parte li suditti, e privati da imposte, et agravi. Il mare mentre è gonfio d'acque non riceve in sé li fiumi che a lui corrono, ma egualmente con lui restano accresciuti, ma diminuito, ch'egli è, li maggiori sgorgando in lui le proprie acque scemano, e li minori affatto s'inaridiscono. Così il nostro stomaco quando patisce indigenza di cibo, con dolore, e travaglio degli altri membri si nutrisce di humori a loro appropriati, come per il contrario con la copia del nutrimento non solo rilascia il depredare, ma ne diffonde ad altrui del proprio. Nell'istesso modo la molteplicità di datii, e vetture non solo libera il popolo dalla vessatione d'imposti, e contributioni, che a supplire all'urgenze, e bisogni del Prencipe sarebbe obbligato, ma ne suchia ancor lui per l'abbondantia del publico danaro non picciol utile. E l'esperienza civile insegna che le città, che fioriscono di copioso negotio il loro popolo è in gran parte allegerito da straordinari **[8r]** agravii, et esorbitanti tributi.

Li Romani così politici, e moderati, tuttavia insino sopra li escrementi humani imposero gravezze, il che trapassò anch'a quelli d'animali brutti appellata la tansa del grisargiro, et anco le operationi vituperose, et obscene concorsero ad arricchire il loro errario, onde le meretrici, et al[t]ri infami, comunicavano al publico portione del loro ignominioso guadagno, oltre la tansa capitale alla più vil classe del popolo imposta dall'istessi Romani. Tutte maniere d'estrationsi, et estorsioni abborrite dalla magnanimità, e grandezza venetiana, havendo per costume di solo tansare l'industria delli huomini, e non le loro vite, castigare li vitii, e non da loro proffitare, il che è avvenuto principalmente per il moderato suo governo, ma in parte aiutato dalla copia di emolumenti, che apporta seco il traffico mercantile, e la maritima negotiatione.

Equally, one cannot deny that an influx of duties to public revenue greatly relieves subjects and private persons in the payment of taxes and burdens. When the sea is swollen with water, it does not receive the rivers that run into it; rather, these rivers remain similarly swollen. But when the sea level decreases, [the waters of] the largest rivers flowing into it dwindle, and the very small rivers dry up completely. So too, when our stomach suffers from lack of food, it subsists on humours from our other limbs, with their subsequent pains and ailments.<sup>14</sup> [But when the opposite occurs, and there is] an abundance of nourishment, not only does our stomach stop the plundering, it also allows its own nourishment to circulate to other parts of the body. Similarly, the preponderance of duties and the taxation of pack animals not only releases the people from the burden of high taxes and contributions – which they would be obliged to pay for the needs and requirements of the prince – [but it also implies that] they [the very same people] profit from an abundance of public money. Civil experience teaches that urban populations in which numerous businesses flourish are in large part relieved from extraordinary [8r] tax burdens and exorbitant levies.

The Romans, who were such balanced and moderate politicians, ultimately imposed taxes on human excrement, which soon included that of brute animals – which was called the grisargiro tax.<sup>15</sup> Even disgraceful and obscene proceedings [such as these] contributed to enriching the treasury, where prostitutes and other infamous individuals transferred a portion of their ignominious earnings to the public purse.<sup>16</sup> In addition, a capitation was also imposed on the vilest class of people. Venetian magnanimity and greatness abhors all these forms of extraction and extortion.<sup>17</sup> Venice has the custom of imposing taxes only on the industry of men, and not on their lives; of punishing their vices and not profiting from them. [This custom] is largely the result of the city's moderate government, but it is partly helped by the abundant rewards that mercantile traffic and maritime business keep bringing in.

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<sup>14</sup> Medicinal beliefs dating back to Galen; see Rudolph E. Siegel, *Galen's System of Physiology and Medicine: An Analysis of His Doctrines and Observations on Bloodflow, Respiration, Humors and Internal Diseases* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

<sup>15</sup> Grisargiro, from Greek χρυσόργυρον ("gold-silver"), was a tax which was also called *lustralis auri argente collatio*. According to Zosimus (*Historia Nova* II:38), this tax was probably first imposed by Emperor Constantine, and it required that all the Emperor's merchant subjects, or all those that were selling any goods whatsoever, would have to pay a levy with gold or silver; see José María Blázquez Martínez, *La presión fiscal en Hispania en el Bajo Imperio según los escritores eclesiásticos y sus consecuencias* (Alicante: Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 2006), 3–4.

<sup>16</sup> See Thomas J. McGinn, "The Taxation of Roman Prostitutes," *Helios* 16 (1989): 79–110; idem, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law in Ancient Rome* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>17</sup> Benjamin Ravid signalled that Luzzatto was "apparently unaware" that the Venetian Senate had imposed a tax on prostitution in 1514 in order to finance the Arsenal. *Economics and Toleration in Seventeenth Century Venice: The Background and Context of the Discorso of Simone Luzzatto* (Jerusalem: Central Press, 1978). In fact, prostitution in Venice had been legalised as early as 1358. See Paula C. Clarke, "The Business of Prostitution in Early Renaissance Venice," *Renaissance Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 419–64.

## CONSIDERATIONE I

### *Dell'utile della negotiatione*

Il consortio humano altro non è che un accoppiamento di reciproci nostri bisogni, ovvero piaceri, e vicendevole contrattatione di abbondantie, e penurie, e quello che li morali [8v] appellano superfluità, lussi, e vani oggetti della nostra avidità, li politici che considerano tutta la massa della humanità, asseriscono essere fondamenti de negotii, elementi de commercii, oppugnatori dell'avaritia, agguagliatori del stato humano, tenace nodo, e glutine delli estremi del mondo, l'uno con l'altro, li pretiosi metalli, e gioie sono superflue, li aromati, e spetiarie non bisognose alla vita cinica, e solitaria, non già alla civile, e politica, non solo necessari per li emolumenti sopradetti, ma anco che con il trasporto de peregrine merci si adducono li costumi, le arti, le dottrine, e l'istessa humanità. La Grecia maestra delle dottrine, hebbe per pedagoghi dell'alfabetto, li mercanti tirii, ove che prima l'ignoranza, e la barbarie, il tutto offuscavano, et occupavano.

Ma per venire al particolare trattato propostomi dico, che fra<sup>12</sup> li giovamenti, et utili, che la natione hebrea apporta alla città di Venetia, principalissimo è il profitto, che dall'essercitio mercantile ne rissulta, professione quasi di lei propria. Dal qual essercitio ne derrivano alla città cinque<sup>13</sup> importanti benefitii:

Primo, l'accrescimento de publici datii d'entrata, et uscita.

Secondo, il trasporto di diverse mercantie da paesi remoti, non solo per necessità delli huomini, ma per ornamento della vita civile.

<sup>12</sup> Fra...propria: qui inizia la seconda parte del manoscritto del *Discorso*, Ms.B.M., 108r.

<sup>13</sup> Cinque: nel manoscritto "quattro," Ms.B.M., ibid.

## CONSIDERATION I

### *On the Benefits of Trade*

Human society is nothing but a union of our mutual needs or pleasures and a reciprocal exchange [of goods that are either available] in abundance or in short supply. What moralists [8v] designate as superfluity, luxury, or vain objects of our greed are claimed by politicians – who must consider humanity as a whole – to be the foundation of trade, elements of commerce, refuters of avarice, and veritable equalisers of the human condition. [In fact, they are] a tight knot that holds together the ends of the earth, one to the other. Precious metals and jewellery are superfluous; aromatic herbs and spices are not needed for the cynical and solitary life. Still, they are necessary for civil and political life, not only for their aforementioned attributes, but also because with the transport of foreign merchandise, customs, arts, learning, and even humanity are passed on. Greece, the master of doctrines, had the Tyrian merchants as pedagogues for the alphabet. Before that, the whole [country] was pervaded and obscured by ignorance and barbarism.<sup>18</sup>

However, directing our attention to the specific treatise I am venturing to compose, I maintain that among the advantages and gains that the Jewish Nation brings to the city of Venice, the most important is the profit that results from their mercantile activities, a profession that is an almost unique feature of this Nation. From this activity, the city draws five important benefits.<sup>19</sup>

First, an increase in import and export duties.

Second, the transport of a variety of merchandise from distant countries – not only things necessary to men, but also items meant to adorn civil life.

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<sup>18</sup> See Josephus, *Against Apion* I:10: “They were late in learning the alphabet and found the lesson difficult; for those who would assign the earliest date to its use pride themselves on having learnt it from the Phoenicians and Cadmus.” See also Eusebius, *Evangelical Preparation* X:2.

<sup>19</sup> On the historical value of these five benefits, see Ravid, *Economics*, 55 and n. 54. Menasseh ben Israel in his “Humble Addresses” made many points similar to those encountered in the *Discourse* and on occasion even translated passages *verbatim* from it, without however mentioning either Luzzatto or the *Discourse*. For a possible reason why Menasseh ben Israel may have chosen not to acknowledge the *Discourse*, see Benjamin Ravid, “‘How Profitable the Nation of the Jewes Are’: The *Humble Addresses* of Menasseh ben Israel and the *Discorso* of Simone Luzzatto,” in *Mystics, Philosophers and Politicians: Essays in Jewish Intellectual History in Honor of Alexander Altmann*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz and Daniel Swetschinski (Durham: Duke University Press, 1982), 159–80, with the evident borrowings of Menasseh ben Israel and the Italian original in Luzzatto in parallel columns. This passage on the five important benefits of mercantile trade was translated almost verbatim, with however the change in the third point of the commodities cited by Luzzatto to “wool, silk, cotton and similar items,” presumably because Menasseh ben Israel thought that they were more appropriate for England.



Terzo, [9r] sommini|strando materie in gran copia a lavoranti, et artigiani come, lana, seta, gottoni, e simili, circa le quali si trattiene l'industria d'operarii mantenendosi in pace, e quiete senza alcuna tumultuaria comotione per penuria del vitto.

Quarto, il smaltimento di tante manifatture fabricate, et elaborate nella città con quali si sostengono tante migliara di persone.

Quinto, il commercio, e la reciproca negotiatione, ch'è il fondamento della pace, e quiete fra popoli confinanti, essendo il più delle volte li Principi commossi alla guerra dalla inclinatione de popoli, che questi da quelli all'arme indotti. L'Egitto e la Sorìa giamai si armò contra l'Italia, ma bensì la costa di Barbaria sempre li fu in aperta guerra, overo nido infame di corsali armati in danno dell'Italia, per non vi essere giamai stat'alcuno commercio, e rilevante negotiatione fra essi popoli, onde Virgilio dell'istessi popoli disse *nullus amor populis, nec foedera sunt*, il che in ogni secolo fu sempre eseguito.

Al qual traffico vi concorrono li Hebrei con industria delle persone, et impiego di loro haveri, onde nel tempo presente con gran floridezza, e frequenza parte del negotio appresso la natione si trova. Ma perché giamai non fu sì indubitata evidenza ch'alla solertia humana mancasse apritura d'oppugnarla, così vi sono alcuni, ch'insurgano [9v] con dire non essere altrimenti li Hebrei introduttori, et apportatori delle mercantie, e contratationi, ma piuttosto di quell'occupatori, e che anticamente, anzi mentre che la città fioriva di affari, erano maneggiati li negotii da proprii cittadini, e li Hebrei in progresso di tempo se ne sono fatti d'essi traffici in gran parte arbitri, e padroni, con gran danno de cittadini, e dell'istessa città, soggiungendo non essere li Hebrei quelli, ch'adducano le mercantie, ma il mirabile sito della città, la commodità del porto di mare, vicinanza di fiumi navigabili, aprossimatione della Germania, libertà del vivere, sicurezza delle facoltà, copia e perfettione dell'arti essere li veri atrattivi e condutteri di merci e negotii, e senza l'industrie vigilanza delli Hebrei il tutto capitarebbe necessariamente in mano de proprii cittadini. Né si può con alcuna ragione sostenere che li Hebrei come sempre esteri siano aguagliati nell'essercitio mercantile, fra tutte le professioni onorevole, e proffittevole, alli cittadini annessi alla città per possesso de beni stabili, et altre prerogative particolari.

Third, [9r] the provision of a large supply of materials for workers and artisans, such as wool, silk, cotton, and other similar goods. [Such large supplies] enhance the continuous industriousness of workers, keeping them peaceful and quiet, without any uprisings caused by food shortages.

Fourth, the sale of many goods fashioned and manufactured in the city, from which many thousands of people can support themselves.

Fifth, commerce and reciprocal trade are the foundations of peace and harmony among neighbouring peoples,<sup>20</sup> since princes are frequently moved to go to war by the inclination of the population, rather than the former pressing the latter to take up arms. Egypt and Syria never armed themselves against Italy, whereas quite the opposite can be said about the coast of Barbary,<sup>21</sup> which was either always in open war against Italy or [functioned as] a nest of pirates, plundering it continuously. For there had never been any trade or relevant negotiations between these peoples. Therefore, Virgil said about the inhabitants of Barbary: *Let no love nor league be between the nations.*<sup>22</sup> And this custom was observed in almost every century.

The Jews are involved in these trades through both their personal industriousness and by investing their wealth. In return, nowadays, part of the business is frequently in their hands, with prosperous outcomes. However, nothing has ever been so evident that human impudence could not find a loophole to attack. Hence there are some who claim [9v] that it was not the Jews who introduced the import of goods and the art of negotiation, but rather that they were usurpers. [They say] that in old times, when the city flourished with business transactions, trade was managed by the citizens themselves, but that the Jews slowly took control and became the sole masters of trade, to the great detriment of other citizens and the city itself. They add that it was not the Jews who brought goods to Venice. Instead, the true factors that allowed merchandise and trade to flourish were the admirable location of the city, the convenience of the seaport, the vicinity of navigable rivers, the proximity of Germany, the freedom of life, the security of the goods, and the abundance and perfection of the arts. Without the vigilance and industriousness of the Jews, [they argue,] everything would still be in the hands of the Venetian citizens. However, it is impossible to maintain that the Jews, who are eternal foreigners, are equals in the mercantile profession, which is as honourable and profitable as other professions, to citizens who have integrated into the city through the possession of real estate or other special privileges.

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20 This idea is probably due to the influence of Grotius (*Mare liberum*). According to Grotius, the inhibition of free trade brings about “just wars.”

21 See glossary. For Barbary and its borders in Luzzatto’s time, see Giovanni Battista Ramusio, *Primo Volume & terze editione delle Navigationi et Viaggi raccolto gia da M. Gio. Battista Ramusio* (In Venetia: Nella stamperia de Giunti, 1563), I, C; Gerard Mercator, *Atlas sive Cosmographicae Meditationes de Fabrica Mundi et Fabricati Figura* (Duisburgi Clivorum, 1595), [68].

22 Virgil, *Aeneid* IV:624.

Questa è quella spetiosa ragione, che da men volgari viene aggitata contra la natione, la cui fallacia agevolmente si renderà manifesta quando da più alto principio si prenderà a considerare il corso dell'humani **[10r]** affari, e come il cangiamento dell'applications, et impieghi di cittadini dipendano dal mutato, e variato stato, e conditione delle città.

This is the specious claim that is made by vulgar people against the Nation, whose fallacy is easily revealed when one examines the course of human [10r] affairs from a higher perspective and sees how the transformation of the professions and the activities of citizens depend upon the changing and various states of affairs and conditions within cities.

## CONSIDERATIONE II

### *Che gran parte del traffico, è in mano di forestieri*

Altro tanto che l'essercitio mercantile è commendabile per se stesso, utile per chi il maneggia, e proffucuo alla città ove si tratta, e tuttavolta faticoso, e di molto pericolo, dovendosi non poche volte arrischiare le persone, e le facoltà a precipitii di lunghi viaggi, travagliose navigatione, e dubbiose affidationi, onde qualunque mercante ha per scopo, e meta de suoi traffici con la cessatione de negotii, il riposo. E doppo haver ammassato ricchezze convenevoli procura di godere l'acquistato in quiete, e tranquillità, investendole in beni stabili, et entrate cittadinesche lontane dall'insulti della fortuna, e questo non solo attenta per se medesimo, ma molto più per suoi figliuoli, e successori, dubitando che come pochi pratici, et esperimentati, disperdano il già da lui acquistato con istento, e travaglio, ché perciò di più incarica li proprii beni di varii impedimenti come di fideicommissi, primegeniture, e simili conditioni, et in questo modo travia li suoi poster<sup>14</sup> [10v] dall'impiego del negotiare.

Dal che procede, che le città divenute grandi, e potenti per il traffico de proprii cittadini, per cause dell'investite di beni stabili, fabbriche di sontuosi edifitii, acquisti di pretiosi supeletili, et occupationi urbane, alla fine la negotiatione perviene in mano di forastieri, e stranieri, spinti nelle città dalla strettezza del vivere nelli loro patrii lochi, overo allettati dall'avvidità del guadagno.

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<sup>14</sup> Poster: parola mancante nel manoscritto del *Discorso*, Ms.B.M., 110v.

## CONSIDERATION II

### *That a Large Part of Trade Lies in the Hands of Foreigners*

Though recommendable in and of itself, and useful for those who are actively involved in it, as well as profitable and beneficial for the city where it is conducted, the mercantile profession is always strenuous and quite dangerous. Many times [people] have had to risk their own lives and possessions when undergoing lengthy voyages, difficult sea crossings, and uncertain commitments. Thus, the goal and purpose of trade for every merchant can only be a cessation of these activities, in other words, a [peaceful] retirement. After having amassed an adequate amount of riches, the merchant makes every effort to take full advantage of his acquisitions in peace and tranquillity, investing them in property and municipal incomes and keeping them away from the insults of fate. He undertakes this task not only for himself, but above all for his children and heirs, since he is full of concern that, due to lack of experience and practice, they might lose that which he has accumulated through much toil and hard work. Therefore, he demands more legal constraints on his property, such as *fideicommissi* and primogeniture,<sup>23</sup> as well as other similar conditions, thereby diverting his descendants [10v] from involvement with the mercantile profession.

It follows that after cities have become large and powerful through the trade of their citizens, due to their investments in real estate, the construction of magnificent buildings, the acquisition of expensive furnishings, and other urban occupations, trade ultimately falls into the hands of foreigners and strangers, who have either been propelled into cities by straitened circumstances in their local towns, or are motivated by a desire for profit.

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<sup>23</sup> Testamentary disposition by which a part or the whole of the patrimony was allocated to an heir as an entail. This disposition forbade the heir to sell or surrender the ownership, binding him to pass the tenancy to the next heir. *Fideicommissi*, generally speaking, are a legal measure mainly used by the aristocracy in order to preserve the integrity of the family's fortune by favouring only one heir, usually the first-born, and thus preventing the heirs from dividing or diminishing the property inside and outside the family. See Marialuisa Ferrari and Gloria Vivenza, "Tutelare la famiglia: conservazione o incremento del patrimonio. Percorsi sei-settecenteschi italiani e inglesi," in *La famiglia nell'economia europea secoli XIII–XVIII / The Economic Role of the Family in the European Economy from the 13th to the 18th Centuries*, ed. Simonetta Cavaciocchi (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2009), 201–41, especially 205–10.

Si potrebbero addurre in ciò molti esempi, ma sufficiente a dovere è la sola città di Venetia, divenuta celebratissimo emporio di tutt'il mondo per il traffico de suoi cittadini, che non solo terminava la loro navigatione nel Levante infino agli ultimi recessi della palude Meotide, ma scorrendo tutto il Mediteraneo occidentale, uscendo fuori dal stretto della parte meridionale trovarono li Etiopii negri, e verso settentrione penetrarono infino gli ultimi porti della Moscovia e Tartaria, di modo che furono commendati per li primi venturieri che lasciassero speranza a posterì per il scoprimento di nuove regioni, e paesi, come nelli viaggi, e navigationi del Mosto, Quirini, Barbaro, e Marco Polo, patricii di essa città si legge.

Many examples of [such cities] could be mentioned. However, the singular case of Venice is sufficient, since it has become the most celebrated centre of commerce, known throughout the world for its citizens' trade. In fact, [Venetian merchants] not only travelled far into the East to the remote and secluded regions of the Maeotian Swamp,<sup>24</sup> but also reached across the entire western Mediterranean, leaving the straits of the southern area,<sup>25</sup> where they discovered black Ethiopians. While heading towards the north,<sup>26</sup> they penetrated the last ports of Moscow and Tartary.<sup>27</sup> In doing so, they were praised as the first adventurers, and raised hopes in their successors for the discovery of new regions and countries, as everybody can read in the accounts of the voyages and travels of Mosto,<sup>28</sup> Quirini,<sup>29</sup> Barbaro,<sup>30</sup> and Marco Polo,<sup>31</sup> [all of whom have been] patricians of this city.

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24 See glossary.

25 The Strait of Gibraltar.

26 Through the Dardanelles.

27 See glossary. In Luzzatto's time, several Elzevir books had been published about the political geography of those regions. Among them see: George Buchanan, William Camden, and Hector Boece, *Respublica sive status regni Scotiae et Hiberniae diversorum autorum* (Lugduni Batavorum: ex officina Elzeviriana, 1627).

28 See glossary. Alvise Ca da Mosto, "Navigatione del medesimo M. Alvise da ca da Mosto," in Giovanni Battista Ramusio, *Primo Volume delle Navigazioni et Viaggi nel qual si Contiene la Descriptione dell'Africa* (In Venetia: Appresso gli Heredi di Lucantonio Giunti, 1550), 105r–120r; Alvise Da Mosto, *Le navigazioni atlantiche del veneziano Alvise Da Mosto*, ed. Tullia Gasparrini Leporace (Roma: Istituto poligrafico dello Stato, Libreria dello Stato, 1966). For further details and bibliography, see Ugo Tucci, "Da Mosto, Alvise," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 32 (1986), available online at [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/alvise-da-mosto\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/alvise-da-mosto_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) (last accessed February 2016).

29 See glossary. Piero Quirini, "Viaggio del magnifico messer Piero Quirino Gentilhuomo vinitiano," in Giovanni Battista Ramusio, *Secondo Volume delle Navigazioni et Viaggi Raccolto gia da M. Gio. Battista Ramusio* (In Venetia: Appresso i Giunti, 1583), 199v–206r; Christoforo Fioravante and Nicolò di Michiel, "Naufragio del sopradetto Messer Piero Quirino descritto per Christoforo Fioravante e Nicolò di Michiel, che si trovarono presenti," in *ibid.*, 206r–211r; modern edition: Pietro Querini, Nicolò De Michele, and Cristofalo Fioravante, *Il naufragio della Querina. Veneziani nel Circolo Polare Artico*, ed. Paolo Nelli (Roma: Nutrimenti, 2007).

30 See glossary. Giosafat Barbaro, *Viaggi fatti da Vinetia, alla Tana, in Persia, in India, et in Costantinopoli: con la descrizione particolare di città, luoghi, siti, costumi, & della Porta del gran Turco: & di tutte le intrate, spese, & modo di gouerno suo, & della ultima impresa contra portoghesi* (In Vinegia: nelle case de' figliuoli di Aldo, 1545); Giosafat Barbaro, "Di Messer Iosafa Barbaro Gentil'huomo Venetiano Il Viaggio della Tana, & nella Persia," I e II Parte, in Ramusio, *Secondo Volume delle Navigazioni*, 91v–112v; modern edition: Giosafat Barbaro, *I viaggi in Persia degli ambasciatori veneti Barbaro e Contarini*, ed. Laurence Lockhart, Raimondo Morozzo della Rocca, and Maria Francesca Tiepolo (Rome: Istituto poligrafico dello Stato, Libreria dello Stato, 1973). Giosafat Barbaro and Ambrogio Contarini, *Travels to Tana and Persia*, trans. William Thomas and Eugen Armand Roy (London: Hakluyt Society, 1873). For further details and bibliography, see Roberto Almagià, "Barbaro, Giosafat," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 6 (1964), available online at [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giosafat-barbaro\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giosafat-barbaro_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) (last accessed February 2016).

31 See glossary.



Ma dopo, che la Serenissima Republica con felice successo dilatò il suo dominio in terra ferma, surse nell'animo di [11r] quegl'industri, et indeffessi solcatori del mare il prudentissimo pensiero di sollevarsi dalle noie, et inviluppi di lontane contrattationi, e pericoli di viaggi, et impiegorono le loro cure nel possesso di beni stabili, coltivationi di terreni, et altr'occupationi della vita civile, non volendo più esporsi a scherzi della fortuna,<sup>15</sup> come lasciò scritto Cicerone trattando della mercatura:

*atque etiam, si satiata quaestu vel contenta potius, ut saepe ex alto in portum, ex ipso portu se in agros possessionesque contulit, videtur iure optimo posse laudari,*

sogiongando:

*omnium autem rerum, ex quibus aliquid acquiritur, nihil est agri cultura melius, [...], nihil homine libero dignius.*

Onde cessando in loro per tal causa la negotiatione subintrorono e ve s'intrusero li forastieri, et esteri di varii lochi, e patrie, in corso di tempo si ritrovorono quasi tutti li traffichi di Ponente, e l'istessa navigatione in potere de Genovesi, Francesi, Inglese, Fiaminghi, et altri, che prima il tutto era in mano de Venetiani.<sup>16</sup> E che ciò sia vero, oltre l'evidentia del fatto che lo comproba, si convince ciò ancora, per esser concesso a qualunque estero il negotiar in Ponente, non così il trafficar in Levante, ch'è permesso a cittadini, et altri

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<sup>15</sup> Fortuna...Onde cessando: la citazione di Cicerone compresa tra "fortuna" e "onde cessando" è assente nel manoscritto del *Discorso*, Ms.B.M., 110v.

<sup>16</sup> Il testo compreso tra "Venetiani" e "parte" è assente nel manoscritto del *Discorso*, Ms.B.M., 111r.

But afterwards, when this most Serene Republic expanded its dominion over the mainland with great success, there arose in the souls [11r] of those who industriously and tirelessly ploughed the sea a most prudent aspiration to rid themselves of the troubles and entanglements that arise from long-distance trade, and of the dangers of travelling. No longer wishing to expose themselves to the vagaries of fortune, [these merchants] turned instead to the acquisition of property, the cultivation of land, and other occupations of civil life.<sup>32</sup> As Cicero wrote when discussing the subject of trade:

*[I]t even seems to deserve the highest respect if those who are engaged in it, satiated, or rather, I should say, satisfied with the fortunes they have made, make their way from the port to a country estate, as they have often made it from the sea into port[.]*

And he adds:

*[O]f all the occupations by which gain is secured, none is better than agriculture, [...] none more becoming to a freeman.<sup>33</sup>*

Over the course of time, they ceased trading for that reason, and so foreigners and strangers from various places and countries took over and became involved in commerce. After a while, almost all Western trading came under the control of the Genoese, the French, the English, the Flemish, and others, and the same occurred with navigation itself. In the past, everything had been entirely in the hands of the Venetians. In addition to the clear evidence, this is also proved by the fact that Western trade was permitted to all foreigners. This was not the case with trade in the East, which was permitted only for Venetian citizens and other privileged indi-

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<sup>32</sup> The tendency of the Venetian nobility to withdraw from commerce, and especially from the Levant trade, which had been perceived as the source of the wealth and greatness of Venice, was a development noted with great concern by Venetian contemporaries from the early sixteenth century on, and has been the subject of much discussion among modern scholars; see Ravid, *Economics*, 56–58.

<sup>33</sup> Cicero, *On Duties* I:42, 151. See also Camerarius, *De securitate agricolarum* 51–55, which refers to the passage from Cicero.

privileggiati solamente, e così se vogliamo considerare il [11v] traffico che si fa dalla parte di Levante in quel tratto di terra ferma, ch'è dalli lidi della Dalmatia sino a Costantinopoli, tutta la contratatione capitò in mano de Turchi overo Greci a loro soggetti. E che sia occorso ciò per volontaria rinontia, et arbitraria alienatione d'essi cittadini, e che non li fu da altrui occupata, si può convincere con due ragioni, che con gran apparenza lo dimostrano.

L'una che non essendo giamai avvenuta nella città di Venetia (così il Signore Iddio la preserva) alcun'invasione di sacco, overo altro flagello che apportassero anichilatione, overo considerabile diminuitione di havere, e ricchezze di cittadini, et essendo li Venetiani tenacissimi de loro primi costumi, et instituti non può essere, che la cessatione del negotio in essi, da altra cagione possi derrivare, e risultare che da spontanea loro deliberatione, havendo ritrovato essi altri impieghi più proficui, e sicuri in che si possino esercitare.

Seconda ragione, ch'essendo proveduto dalla publica prudenza un accrescimento di datio al forastiero che traffica in Ponente di tre per cento nell'entrata, et altrettanto d'uscita più di quello che contribuisce il Venetiano, non è da dubitare, che se il cittadino fosse inclinato alla negotiatione, in breve tempo stancarebbe, et escluderebbe il forastiero dal negotio, havendo [12r] vantaggio di sei per cento nel smaltimento delle sue merci sopra di lui. Ma perché esso cittadino si ha già procacciato altri proffitti più sicuri, e guadagni più facili, non consente di lasciarsi lusingare da qualsivoglia avvantaggio di partito per inviluparsi di nuovo in fastidii, e dubbietà di negotii, et in tal maniera è capitato affatto il traffico di Ponente, e della stessa Italia in potere di stranieri.

viduals.<sup>34</sup> And thus, if we consider the [11v] mercantile activities that occurred in that area of the East that stretches from the shores of Dalmatia to Constantinople, all of the intermediary trade has fallen into the hands of the Turks or their Greek subjects. [The present state of affairs] is the result of the voluntary renunciation and arbitrary alienation of the Venetians and not of other people seizing the trade, which can be demonstrated with two arguments that prove it.

First, the city of Venice (may God preserve it) has never suffered an invasion nor a sacking, nor have there been any other calamities that could have brought about the destruction or considerable reduction of the possessions and riches of its citizens. Given that Venetians have persistently clung to their original customs and institutions, the cessation of trade could not have been caused by anything other than their own spontaneous initiative after they discovered other, more profitable and secure employment for themselves.

The second reason lies in a provision introduced through the prudence of the public [authorities]: an additional import and export duty of three per cent was imposed on foreigners who traded with the West, which was more than the Venetians paid. Consequently, there was no doubt that if a Venetian were inclined to trade, he would drive any foreigner out of business within a short time, having [12r] an advantage of six per cent over him in the selling of his goods. However, since these citizens had already secured other, safer profits and easier gains, they could not be coaxed back by any random prospect of profit to become entangled once more in the problems and uncertainties of trade; this is how trade with the West and within Italy passed completely into the hands of foreigners.

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34 From the fourteenth century on, the privilege of engaging in trade between Venice and the Levant was limited to the two upper classes of society in the city of Venice, the nobles and the *cittadini originarii*, who usually comprised slightly under ten percent of the population. Foreigners could, however, obtain two types of citizenship: *de intus* (i.e., within Venice) and *de intus et de extra*, which also conferred the privileges of engaging in the Levant trade and paying the lower customs rates established for Venetian citizens. The requirement for citizenship *de intus* was residence in Venice with family as a taxpayer for fifteen years, and for *de intus et de extra*, twenty-five years; see the legislation of 1552, presumably still in effect at the time of the publication of the *Discourse*, in English translation in David Chambers and Brian Pullan, eds., *Venice: A Documentary History: 1450–1630* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 276–78. Additionally, starting sometime between 1483 and 1524, Ottoman subjects were also allowed to engage in the Levant trade, a concession made by the Venetian government in order to retain the Venetian privileges in the greatly expanded Ottoman territory and also to make it possible for Ottoman subjects to come with their merchandise to Venice, rather than requiring them to go to other Italian port cities, especially Ancona, which were commercial rivals of Venice. For a comparison of the status of Jewish merchants with that of Christian merchants, see Benjamin Ravid, “An Introduction to the Charters of the Jewish Merchants of Venice,” in *The Mediterranean and the Jews II: Society, Culture and Economy in Early Modern Times*, ed. Elliot Horowitz and Moise Orfali (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002), 204–211, photo-reproduced in Id., *Studies on the Jews of Venice, 1382–1797* (Ashgate: Aldershot, Hants, 2003).

Onde in tale stato di cose non si deve questionare, e porre in paragone qual sia più giovevole alla città, et al publico l'essere manegiata la negotiatione di Ponente, e della terra ferma di Turchia dalli Hebrei, ovvero da proprii cittadini, ma bene si deve discorrere, e ponderare se più comodo risultarebbe essend'il traffico nelle mani d'esteri, ovvero appresso delli Hebrei paragonando questi solamente insieme, e credo che formando la controversia in tale modo per molte ragioni, e conseguenze agevolmente si potrà concludere a favore delli Hebrei.

Considering all these facts, one should not question or compare what would be the most profitable option for the city and for public revenue, namely whether trade with the West and the mainland of Turkey should be conducted by Jews or by Venetian citizens, nor should one assess this. Rather, one must ponder and thoroughly discuss whether it is more profitable for trade to be in the hands of foreigners or in the hands of the Jews, taking into account all the Jews together.<sup>35</sup> So for many reasons, I believe that if the contentious debate were presented in this way, one would easily conclude in favour of the Jews.

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<sup>35</sup> See Ravid, *Economics*, 33–35.

### CONSIDERATIONE III

***Si discorre per qual causa le città desistono d'arichire,  
e delle provisioni in tal proposito***

[12v] Aviene alle gran città, e popolationi quell'istesso che occorre a nostri corpi, che da picciol principio, e quasi insensibile trahendo origine, per mezzo della continua nutritione, si riducono a grandezza riguardevole, ma dopo arrivati a certo termine prescrittoli dalla natura dessistono di più crescere, et augumentarsi, conservandosi per certo corso di tempo in eguale stato. Così le città doppo esser giunte a segno limitato di popolatione, e ricchezze pongono meta a loro progressi perseverando nell'istesso stato che si ritrovano, overo da esso declinando. La cagione di ciò in quanto alle ricchezze, a mio credere è, che dopo l'essersi fatti oppulenti, li proprii cittadini, et habitanti, per mezzo della contrattatione, depongono come habbiamo detto li primi spirti, né procurano maggior augumento, ma solo hanno mira di fermare, e conservare li loro haveri.

Subintrano poi in loro vece li forastieri nell'animo de quali insurge ancora l'istesso desiderio di quiete e riposo, e dopo l'essere satolli de guadagni, li conducono nelle loro patrie, et a questi [13r] pa|rimente succedano altri esteri con l'istesso talento, di modo che sempre continua il trasporto del danaro ammassato dalla città, senz'alcun augumento di ricchezze in essa, ma piuttosto ne segue evidente detrimento, simile al mare che vi concorrono tutti li fiumi con sì grande tributo d'acque, eppure sempre persevera nell'istessa quantità senz'alcun accrescimento, diffondendo insensibilmente l'acque ricevute all'istessi principii, et origine di fiumi. Così l'influsso d'esteri da diverse reggioni, non altera, et arricchisce le città, perché con il continuo reflusso viene trasmesso il danaro acquistato alli lochi ove quelli forastieri derrivarono.

## CONSIDERATION III

### *On the Reason Why Cities Cease to Grow Rich, and Making Provisions Regarding This Matter*

[12v] Like our bodies, cities and populations emerge from small, almost imperceptible origins. By means of continuous nutrition, they grow to considerable size. But after they have reached the limits prescribed by nature, they cease to grow further, remaining the same size for a certain amount of time. Thus, upon having reached a limit in population and wealth, cities either cease to grow and keep on living according to the same standards as before, or decline. The reason for this, as I see it, especially with regard to wealth, is that when citizens and inhabitants have become rich through trade, they set aside their initial commercial spirit. They do not procure greater increases for themselves either, but aim at consolidating and preserving their possessions.

Then, foreigners come to replace them, and in the hearts of these foreigners there arises once more the same desire for peace and rest. And so, upon having made enough money, they take their wealth back to their homelands. They [13r] in turn are succeeded by other foreigners with the same talent, so that the money keeps flowing endlessly out of the city. [Consequently, we observe] no increase in the city's wealth; on the contrary, it even turns out to be to the city's detriment. This can be compared to the sea, where all rivers meet with a great sharing of water, and yet the sea always maintains the same level of water,<sup>36</sup> without increase, since it redistributes the waters it receives back to the sources and origins of the rivers. In the same manner, the influx of foreigners from various regions neither alters nor enriches cities, since with the continuous backward flow, the money acquired is transferred to the places from which these foreigners originated.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> See Ecclesiastes 1:7.

<sup>37</sup> This issue was a constant matter of concern for the Venetian government. For example, the preamble to the above-cited law of 1552 (11r, n. 34) complained that many foreigners who had become citizens and undertaken to dwell in Venice continuously, nevertheless after enjoying the privilege of citizenship and amassing a great sum of money, left Venice with their wealth and went to dwell in other places, thus repaying the munificence of the Republic with ingratitude. Therefore, henceforth naturalized citizens were to remain domiciled in the city and to declare themselves as Venetian citizens in all other places under the pain of a fine of five hundred ducats; ASV, Maggior Consiglio, deliberazioni, reg. 26, 17v–18r, August 21, 1552, in English translation in Chambers and

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**Note:** On this chapter, see Riccardo Bachi, “La dottrina sulla dinamica della città secondo Giovanni Botero e secondo Simone Luzzatto,” *Atti della accademia nazionale dei lincei*, 8th ser., 1 fasc. 11–12 (November–December 1946): 369–78; see also the opening lines of the *relazione* of the Venetian ambassador in Paris, Michele Suriano, sent in 1562: “Kingdoms and city-states are like men; their health and vigor do not last forever. First they flourish, then they grow old, and finally, they disappear,” in James. C. Davis, *Pursuit of Power: Venetian Ambassadors' Reports on Turkey, France and Spain in the Age of Phillip II, 1560–1600* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1970), 175; see also *ibid.*, 157.



Per provvedimento di tale inconveniente, doi sono li modi da praticarsi. L'uno, con impedire il traffico a forastieri direttamente, ovvero obliquamente, con aggravare le loro mercantie<sup>17</sup> di maggior imposto di datio di quello si fa a cittadini, e con prohibire, alcune loro mercantie, e manifatture, e per altre vie disturbative del loro negotio. Secondo modo, con procurare d'incorporare, et inestare alla città detti forastieri, ch'a guisa degli altri cittadini si stabiliscono in essa. Circa l'uno, e l'altro modo è bisogno di esata circonspezione, et accurata advertenza.

**[13v]** La prima maniera fu osservata, e maneggiata da due regine d'Inghilterra, Maria, et Elisabetta, l'una la tentò, e l'altra con facilità la pose in essecutione. Eransi molto avanti a' tempi nostri collegate et accordate insieme molte città nella parte settentrionale, che possedevano porto di mare, ovvero vicinanza di fiumi navigabili, a dar opera in comune alla navigatione di quei mari, in modo ch'era tutta da loro maneggiata, onde n'acquistorono appresso le città settentrionali amplissimi privilegi, e prerogative, e quasi totale esentione di datio. E questa fu la Compagnia Anassatica celebratissima per tutta Europa.

Assali in pensiero alla Regina Maria d'accrescergli l'agravio de datii, che d'uno per cento, che pagavano, per l'avvenire dovessero contribuire infino alli vinti, con alteratione d'altri loro privilegi, difficultandoli per tal via la navigatione. L'istesso continuò di fare la Regina Elisabetta che li successe, ma con maggior pertinacia d'animo, e ferma resolutione. Fu da volgari nel principio improbato questo tentativo come quello ch'in apparenza impediva, e sbandava la navigatione dal Regno d'Inghilterra trovandosi tutta in potere di detta compagnia. Ma l'esperienza, che seguì al fatto insegnò qual fosse stato il giuditio, e la virile prudenza di dette regine, **[14r]** ch'osservan[d]esse che tutto il guadagno, ch'era importantissimo, che si estraheva dal trasporto delle mercantie nel loro regno,

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<sup>17</sup> Mercantie: nel manoscritto del *Discorso* dopo "mercantie" è stato cancellato "et manifatture," Ms.B.M., 112v.

There are two remedies for this inconvenience. The first consists in limiting foreign trade, either directly or indirectly, by imposing higher duties on their goods than on those of the citizens, and by prohibiting the sale of some of their merchandise and manufacturing, or by any other methods that can disturb their trade. The second way consists of incorporating the aforementioned foreigners into the city so that they settle there. Either remedy requires careful attention and substantial caution.

[13v] The first way was embarked upon by two queens of England: Mary,<sup>38</sup> who attempted it, and Elizabeth,<sup>39</sup> who executed it with dexterity. Long before our time, many cities in the northern European regions that possessed a seaport or were in the vicinity of navigable rivers joined together and agreed to share the work of navigating these seas, with the result that they were able to control all of this work. They then acquired the amplest privileges and prerogatives from the northern cities, and an almost complete exemption from import and export taxes. This group became the Hanseatic League,<sup>40</sup> greatly celebrated throughout Europe.

Queen Mary began to consider raising customs duties on the League from one per cent, as they used to pay, to twenty per cent, along with a change in other privileges, with the result that she made maritime trade more difficult for the League. Queen Elizabeth, who succeeded her, continued to do the same, but with firm resolution and a greater tenacity of spirit. In the beginning, inexperienced people hastily condemned this attempt as something that appeared to impede and divert maritime trade from the Kingdom of England, when it was in fact all in the hands of the aforementioned League.<sup>41</sup> However, the experience that followed this decision [in fact] revealed the judgment and prudence that these queens possessed. [14r] [In fact], they observed that all the earnings, which were of great importance, and which were being extracted as a result of the transport of goods into their kingdom,

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Pullan, *Venice: A Documentary History*, 276–78. The problem was already set forth in a letter written in 1509: “There are also many people who have come from diverse places for dealing and warehousing, as from Germany and all of Italy, and have stayed on to make money and have been residents for a long time; but the majority also have families in their own countries, and many after a little while leave for home, and in their place send for others, who care for nothing except making money ...” (Ibid., 269).

38 See glossary.

39 See glossary.

40 See glossary. See also Frédéric Mauro, “Merchant Communities 1350–1750,” in *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World 1350–1750*, ed. James D. Tracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 255–86, namely 256–58. Concerning the decline of Venice and the rise of England, see Maria Fusaro, *Political Economies of Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean: The Decline of Venice and the Rise of England 1450–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

41 In 1579, Queen Elizabeth I cancelled the Hanseatic league’s commercial privileges for good. See Joseph Kulischer, *Allgemeine Wirtschaftsgeschichte des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1971 [1928]), 240.

devolveva e si riduceva appresso detta compagnia al regno aliena et estera, e li loro isolani benché dispostissimi all'essercitio marinaresco infracidirsi nell'otio, ignari et inesperti della navigatione, perciò tentorono di sturbare la negotiatione anassatica, onde hanno posto in necessità alli loro proprii vassalli d'impiegarsi nella navigatione. Dal che ne risultò com'al presente si scorge inestimabile beneficio, ché sono arrivati all'ultimo segno di reputatione nella professione marinaresca.

Ma altrotanto ch'ad esse regine prosperò il loro attentato, conviene ad altri in praticare tal esempio esser molto cauti, et avveduti, poiché il sito dell'isola posta dalla natura per il dominio de mari occidentali, e settentrionali, e l'assoluta padronia, e dominio, che essercitavano dette regine in tutti li porti, e ridotti del regno, facilitarono anzi aprirono la strada a sì felice avvenimento. Il che non così facilmente succederebbe qui in Italia, essendo li suoi porti posseduti da diversi principi, e potentati, onde difficultando, et escludendo uno di essi il concorso d'esteri, immediate sarebbero ricevuti dagli altri con amplissimi privilegi, et esentioni, oltre che non si ritrova disposto il popolo d'una sola **[14v]** città maritima in Italia per poter supplire al mancamento della navigatione forestiera. Dal che ne risultarebbe a quella città quasi una totale anichilatione del negotio, il che non è avvenuto nel Regno d'Inghilterra per le molteplicità delle città, e populationi disposte a tal essercitio, rassembrando tutta quell'isola quasi una sola, e continuata città maritima.

Secondo modo d'evitare il predetto disordine vi si rimedia con l'ammassare, et unire li forastieri con li cittadini fermandoli in alcuna maniera nella città, il che non manca ancor di gran difficultà per porlo in essecutione. Primieramente s'opponne a ciò l'istinto naturale, e l'affetto indelebile ch'ognuno tiene alla sua patria, e desiderio di terminare la vita ove n'ebbe il principio. Vi si aggiunge che molti trafficanti forastieri nelle loro città sono partecipi del governo, come Genovesi, Fiaminghi, Alemanni di città franche, et in alcuna a parte li Fiorentini, che perciò, non permuterebbero il domicilio della loro città in altra habitatione, oltre ch'acquistando la semplice cittadinanza, ove trafficano, conviene rinontiare qualunque altra ch'in altro locho godessero, e l'esperienza ci mostra, ritrovarsi nella città molti esteri<sup>18</sup> opulentissimi, che per la lunghezza del loro stantiarvi potrebbero **[15r]** impetrarla con suoi privilegi, ma per la causa antedetta non la procurano né l'attentano.

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<sup>18</sup> Esteri: nel manoscritto del *Discorso* al posto di "esteri," si ripete "Genovesi et Fiamenghi," Ms.B.M., 115v.

devolved and went to the aforementioned League, which was alien and foreign to the English kingdom. [They also realised] that the islanders, although very well-disposed to seafaring practices, were falling into inactivity and were deprived of any knowledge or command of navigation. For these reasons, [both queens] tried to disrupt the Hanseatic sea trade. Accordingly, they ruled that their subjects should employ themselves in navigation, which resulted in immeasurable benefits at once, since to this day [the English] enjoy the highest reputation in the seafaring profession.

However, even though these queens' attempts prospered, it behoved others to be very cautious and sensible when following their example. [One must consider] the position of the [British] Island, which nature placed as the site of dominion over the Western and Northern seas. The absolute control and dominion that these two queens exercised in all ports and trading posts of the kingdom facilitated and indeed opened the way for such a fortunate outcome. The same could not happen so easily here in Italy, since the ports are controlled by different princes and powers. Should any of these make conditions difficult for foreigners and exclude them from the competition, the latter would immediately be welcomed by others elsewhere with extensive and ample privileges.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, not even one [14v] maritime city in Italy would have a population disposed to make up for the lack of foreign maritime trade. Therefore, the consequences in that city would be almost a complete cessation of commerce. This did not occur in the Kingdom of England because of the multiplicity of cities and populations disposed to this practice, making the entire island appear almost as a single, continuous maritime city.

The other way to avoid the above-mentioned disorder would be to increase the number of foreigners, allowing them to merge with the citizens, and by somehow keeping them in the city. This plan would be quite difficult to implement, however. First, the natural instinct and indelible affection that everyone holds for his native country, as well as a desire to end one's life where it began, are opposed to [these measures]. In addition, many foreign merchants such as the Genoese, the Flemish, the Germans from the free cities, and to some extent the Florentines, are active in the government of their cities. Therefore, they would not change their residence from their cities to another, particularly since acquiring simple citizenship in the place where they trade requires renouncing something that they might have enjoyed elsewhere. Experience shows us that in the city [of Venice] there are many very wealthy foreigners who could have [15r] requested citizenship [here] with its [accompanying] privileges, because of the length of time they have lived there. Yet they have not obtained it nor attempted to do so, for the aforementioned reasons.

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42 For an elaboration of this theme, see Benjamin Ravid, "A Tale of Three Cities and Their *Raison d'état*: Ancona, Venice, Livorno and the Competition for Jewish Merchants in the Sixteenth Century," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 9 (1991-2): 138-62, also published in book form with the same pagination under the title *Jews, Christians and Muslims in the Mediterranean World after 1492*, ed. Alisa Meyuhas Ginio (London: Frank Cass, 1992).

Seconda cagione ch'impedisce il fermare l'esteri nella città è la penuria di terreni per poterne fare nuovi acquisti essend'il tutto già occupato da proprii cittadini in tanto numero moltiplicati, la quale angustia si accresce per esser'ingombrato per lungo tratto il circuito della città di amplissime lagune, e paludosi terreni inhabili alla coltivatione. Et augment'ancora la difficoltà ch'essendo li terreni posseduti quasi tutti da gente civile, sono per il più incaricati di conditioni, e varii impedimenti, ch'insospetiscono li nuovi acquistatori di comperarsi un litiggio invece di terreno.

Terza, che li mercanti hanno per costume dopo haver raddunato ricchezze non contentarsi del loro semplice possesso, ma son'assaliti da pensieri di conseguire prerogative, e dignità straordinarie, et insieme con terreni procurare titoli, dominii, et iurisdictioni per rendere più illustre la loro conditione per inanzi ignota, ché non in ogni loco gli può riuscire tal' attentato, et altri non si compiacciono di fare acquisti se non in lochi popolari conforme alla loro conditione, e qualità non essendoli grato ancor, il confinare con loro maggiori.

Per queste cagioni, e simili si rende difficile il fare allignare, et arrestare li negotianti stranieri [15v] nellla città, et insieme con loro stabilirvi li loro haveri, e facultà. Ma al sopradetto inconveniente pare che mirabilmente sovenga, e rimedia il traffico maneggiato dagli Hebrei, non havendo essi propria patria alla quale aspirano di trasportare li loro haveri ammassati nella città, nemmeno in alcun loco, hanno facultà et habilità di acquistare beni stabili, e se l'havessero, non compirebbe a' loro interessi il farlo, per non impegnare, et incarcerare li loro haveri mentre che le persone sono soggette a tante varietà, stantiando in ogni loco con salvi condotti, et indulti de principi. E tanto meno aspirano a dignità, titoli e dominii, per il ch'ove una volta sono con benignità ricevuti fanno ferma resolutione di non più partirsi, oltre che non havendo l'Hebreo habitante in Venetia alcun'arte propria, altro che il negotio, l'è difficultoso il partirsi, non havendo speranza di sostentarsi con alcuna professione, et arte essercitabile in ogni città, ma, le negotiatione, e traffico in ogni loco sonno variabili, e conviene per introdurli, et aviarli, lunga osservatione, e concorso d'amici.

Et ancor non vi è dubbio che fra tutti li stati,<sup>19</sup> e lochi del mondo si compiace la natione hebrea del soavissimo governo della Serenissima Republica, per la forma del regimento stabile, e non variabile per la mutabilità de pensieri d'un [16r] sol Principe, et instigatione di consiglieri, et anco per essere la Republica per suo instinto spetiale amatrice di pace con suoi vicini, conoscendo bene la natione in tempo di guerra essere la primiera esposta all'estorsione de soldati amici, preda de nemici, et all'impositioni, e gravetze de prencipi.

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19 Stati: qui termina la seconda e ultima parte del manoscritto del *Discorso*, Ms.B.M., 116v.

The second thing impeding the settlement of foreigners in Venice is the shortage of land that one can acquire there; everything is occupied by an increasing number of [Venetian] citizens. This scarcity is even more notable because the city's surface area is blocked by a long stretch of wide lagoons and swampy lands, unfit for cultivation. The difficulties increase further since the land is almost entirely owned by the citizenry, and it is often burdened with conditions and various impediments so that new buyers grow suspicious of buying disputes rather than land.

Third, once merchants become wealthy, they are generally no longer satisfied with their possessions alone, but are assailed with thoughts about obtaining prerogatives, extraordinary honours, and, together with land, titles, properties, and jurisdictions to render their previously unknown names more illustrious. However, such attempts do not succeed in every location, and some do not take pleasure in making acquisitions in unfashionable places, not suited to their position and quality, for they do not like to be neighbours with people who are more important than they are.

For these and similar reasons, it is difficult to firmly establish foreign merchants [15v] in the city, with all their property and wealth. However, the Jewish people handle trade admirably, and resolve and remedy the aforementioned inconveniences, for the Jews do not have their own homeland to which they might aspire to transport the wealth they amass in the city, nor do they have the right or ability to acquire real estate in any other place. And even if they had this, it would not be in their interest to do so, since they would be forced to tie up their property in a single specific place while their persons are subject to many changes, particularly given that they abide in every place with the guarantee of safe conduct and the permission of the princes. They aspire much less to dignities, titles, and properties, since once they have been received with kindness, they firmly resolve never to leave again. Furthermore, since a Jew residing in Venice has no other occupation than trade,<sup>43</sup> it is difficult for him to leave, as he has no hope of sustaining himself with a profession or occupation that can be practised in every city. Trade and commerce are variable in each place, which means that long observation and the assistance of friends are necessary in order to introduce and initiate them.

Moreover, there is no doubt that among all the states and places of the world, the Jewish Nation feels comfortable with this most pleasant government of the Most Serene Republic, because the form of its stable rule does not change according to the mutability of the thoughts of [16r] one ruler or depending on the instigation of counsellors. Furthermore, the Republic, through its special instinct, is a lover of peace with its neighbours, for the Jewish Nation know very well that in times of war they are the first to be exposed to the extortion of allied soldiers, to the enemy's pillaging, and to the impositions and levies of the rulers.

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<sup>43</sup> Luzzatto seems to intentionally disregard the fact that the Jews were not given free choice to commit themselves to professions other than trade.

La frequenza del negotio, il porto del mare, la copia di tutte le cose appartenenti al vito sommamente li complice. Il popolo minuto esserli amico, e praticabile sopra modo gli agrada, ma più di tutto li tien fermi, et annessi alla città, e suo Stato l'esemplare giustitia somministrata in loro difesa contro qualsivoglia ordine di persone che li offendesse sì nella vita che nella robba, con osservarli puntualmente tutto quello che nelle loro condotte, e privilegi gli è promesso.

Onde si può arditamente concludere che tralasciato, e cessato il negotio dell'Occidente nelli proprii cittadini, che più giovevole agl'interessi del Prencipe, e degl'istessi cittadini è, suposto ancorché gli Hebrei non augmentassero il negotio mercantile, il ritrovarsi il traffico in potere della natione hebrea stabilite nella città le persone, e fermate le facultà, ch'in mano di forastieri, che sempre sono a lei per le cause antedette esteri, et alieni, oltre che li Hebrei non transferendosi fuori della città, n'havendo alcuna stanza spetiale, non è [16v] pericolo ancora ch'apportino altrove le professioni più nobili, e profficue per ornare le loro patrie.

Di più anch'è degno di riflessione, che ritrovandosi la navigatione di Ponente in mano di forestieri, ne risulta alla città disavantaggio di grande conseguenza, essendo l'Italia in tale maniera situata che capitando alla sua volta vascelli da ponente, prima scaleggiano a Genova, la quale da pochi anni si ampliò assai di traffico maritimo, dopo successivamente aprodano a Livorno, Cività Vecchia, Napoli, Messina, Raguggi, Ancona, e finalmente a Venetia, se gli è bisogno d'alcun smaltimento per le reliquie, e rissidui delle loro mercantie com'ultimo porto della Christianità. Né il disgravio del novo imposto dell'uva passa evitò, e rimediò affatto tal pregiudizio, e capitando le mercantie particolarmente a Livorno, e Genova, si distribuiscono per tutta Lombardia, Piemonte, e regioni alpine che li confinano, e parimente per la Romagna, e Marca d'Ancona, e massime quando in detti porti abbondano, e che a Venetia scarseggiano.

Ma il negotio destinato per gli Hebrei d'Italia da loro compagni, et amici, da Livorno in poi, non può capitare se non nella città, non havendo per ancora gli Hebrei tentato di porre nelli detti lochi stanza, e domicilio, e Livorno stesso dopo alcune eccessive perdite ch'occorse [17r] gli anni passati nella contrattatione di formenti fu da Hebrei in gran parte abbandonato. Né si deve stimare lieve la negotiatione de detti Hebrei poichè molti di loro che si ritrovano in altri paesi rimettono gran parte de loro haveri in mano delli habitanti della città non potendosi transferire con le loro persone per varie cause, bastandoli d'haver posto le loro facultà in loco sicuro.

The regularity of trade, the seaport, and the abundance of all things pertaining to sustenance entirely benefits them. The common people are friendly and very agreeable. But above all, what holds them firmly attached to the city and its institutions is the exemplary justice administered in their defence towards any group who might offend them, whether with regard to their life or their possessions. The same justice guarantees that everything contained in their charters and all the privileges promised to them are kept.

Thus, one can boldly conclude that once [Venetian] citizens have given up and broken off trade in the West, it is more beneficial to the interests of the ruler and the citizens themselves – even supposing that the Jews did not augment mercantile trade – for commerce to fall into the hands of the Jewish Nation. For its people and possessions are established and settled in the city, rather than in the hands of foreigners, who are always alien to the city for the aforementioned reasons. Furthermore, given that the Jews will not move away from the city, since they do not have a special place of residence anywhere, there is no [16v] further danger in them taking the noblest and most advantageous professions elsewhere in order to adorn their native lands.

It is worth reflecting on the fact that since the route towards the West is in the hands of foreigners, this results in the greatest disadvantage for the city, since Italy is situated in such a way that ships coming from the West first unload cargo at Genoa, which has expanded its maritime trade in the last few years. Afterwards, the ships land at Livorno, Civitavecchia, Naples, Messina, Ragusa, Ancona, and [only] finally Venice, if they need to rapidly sell off the remainder of their merchandise, since Venice is the last Christian port. Nor has the relief from the burdensome new tax on raisins somehow succeeded in remedying this shortcoming.<sup>44</sup> Especially when the merchandise are unloaded in Livorno and Genoa, they are distributed throughout the entirety of Lombardy, Piedmont, and the bordering Alpine regions, and likewise throughout Romagna and the Marche of Ancona. Thus, the more goods that abound in these ports, the greater their scarcity in Venice.

But the merchandise destined for the Jews of Italy from their compatriots and friends, from Livorno and beyond, cannot arrive anywhere other than the city of Venice, since the Jews have not yet tried to settle and live in any of the aforementioned places. Livorno itself, after some excessive losses that occurred [17r] in past years in the wheat trade, has been largely abandoned by the Jews. Nor should the above-mentioned Jewish trade ever be judged negligible, since many Jews who end up in other lands hand over a large part of their property to the inhabitants of the city. They are thus satisfied with having placed their riches in a secure place, for

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<sup>44</sup> See Maria Fusaro, *L'uva passa. Una guerra commerciale tra Venezia e l'Inghilterra, 1540–1640* (Venice: Venice University Press, 1997).



E questo è detto in quanto alla contrattatione di Ponente. E non vale il dire che senza il traffico degli Hebrei a tutti li modi capitarebbero a Venetia l'istesse mercantie, e nell'istessa quantità per il necessario smaltimento nelle provincie circonvicine, ch'in quanto all'Italia di già si ha mostrato non esser ciò necessario.

Ma di più dico esser cosa indubitabile che l'abbondanza delle mercantie cagiona il consumo, e massime di quelle che servono per delitie, e non sono necessarie al nostro vitto, essendo verissimo il detto di Salomone nell'Ecclesiaste *ubi sunt opes multae, multi et qui comedent eas*.<sup>20</sup> E se il pane, et il vino, in tempo di carestia se ne consuma con riservata parsimonia, tanto meno le superflue, che solamente al lusso degli huomini servono. Il zuccaro sì grande conditura de cibi, e tanto grato al gusto in tempo di penuria non si adopera per mità, come si può ciò comprobare dal tempo che li zuccari venivano in gran copia da Spagna, ch'hora solo d'Alessandria di Egitto [17v] alla città provengono, e vi si osserverà differenza considerabile.

E così delle spetiarie, et altre delicatezze humane, che sono lo sforzo delle mercantie che da parti lontane prevengono, e la penuria di alcune merci causa la loro disuetudine. La carestia di zambelotti già pochi anni introdusse nella città l'uso di drappi fiaminghi nella copia ch'hora si vede, onde l'abbondanza di mercantie addotte da Hebrei causa ancora il smaltimento e consumo, d'onde ne prevengono li emolumenti di datii al Prencipe. In quanto poi al negotio di Levante

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<sup>20</sup> Ecclesiastes 5:10: "Ubi multae sunt opes multi et qui comedunt eas."

they [themselves] are not able to move personally, for various reasons. This holds true for the trade in the West. As for claiming that without the trade of the Jews the same merchandise in the same quantities would nonetheless arrive in Venice, because there is still the obligatory distribution to the surrounding provinces, this is not necessarily the case in Italy, as already demonstrated above.

Besides, it is also an unquestionable fact that the abundance of trade stimulates consumption, particularly of those items that serve to enhance pleasure and are not necessary for nourishment. In this case, the saying of Solomon in Ecclesiastes is absolutely true: “*When goods increase, they are increased that eat them.*”<sup>45</sup> If one consumes bread and wine parsimoniously in times of famine, so the less one will consume of superfluous items that serve only as luxuries to men.<sup>46</sup> In times of scarcity, sugar, enjoyed as a sweetener of foods and pleasing to the taste, is not used half as much as normal. This can be proven: once upon a time sugar came in great quantities from Spain,<sup>47</sup> and now it only arrives in Venice from Alexandria in Egypt; [17v] this is why one may observe a considerable difference [in its usage].

[A similar argument can be made] regarding spices and other sophisticated items that are the main form of merchandise brought here from distant places. [However,] the shortage of some goods causes them not to be used any longer. The scarcity of *zambellotti* a few years ago led to the use of Flemish cloth in Venice in the abundance that one currently sees.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, because of the abundance of merchandise imported by the Jews, sales and consumption increased and generated additional customs revenue for the prince. Considering the trade with the East,

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45 Hebrew: *ברכות, הטובה, רבן, אוכליה*.

46 See Bacon, *Essays*, XXXIV, “Of Riches,” 109: “So saith Salomon; *Where much is, there are Many to consume it; And what hath the Owner, but the sight of it, with his Eyes?* The Personall Fruition in any Man, cannot reach to feel the Great Riches; There is a Custody of them; Or a Power of Dole and Donative of them.”

47 Concerning sugar, Luzzatto was probably drawing his information from Alvise Ca’ da Mosto, in Ramusio’s edition (see *supra*). For the history and production of sugar under Portuguese protection, see Giulio Landi’s treatise, *Insulae Materiae Descriptio* (c. 1534), recently published by Silvano Peloso, *Al di là delle Colonne d’Ercole. Madera e gli arcipelaghi atlantici nelle cronache italiane di viaggio dell’Età delle Scoperte. Con la prima edizione integrale della Insulae Materiae Descriptio* (c. 1534) (Viterbo: Sette Città, 2004), 152. See also Giacinto Gimma, *Della storia naturale delle gemme, delle pietre, e di tutti i minerali, ovvero della fisica sotterranea*. (Napoli: Gennaro Muzio, 1730), 411–14. For a study of the relevance of sugar in Spain, see David Abulafia, “Sugar in Spain,” *European Review* 16 (2008): 191–210.

48 “Zambellotti,” “zambellotti,” or “cambellotti” are woollen clothes made of camel hair or goat hair. See “Glossary of Renaissance Dress and Textile Terms” in Jacqueline Herald, *Renaissance Dress in 1400–1500* (London: Bell & Hyman, 1981). Zambellotti are also mentioned by Marco Polo in chapter 51 of his *Milione*, where he says that the zambellotti manufactured in the Levant are made of camel hair or white wool and are the most beautiful and valuable in the world. See also Lattes, *Ma’amar*, 158 n. 18.

circa la scala di Spalatro ove vi concorrono tutte le mercantie non solo d'Europa, ma dall'Asia per via di terra, non è dubbio che non capitando in mano degli Hebrei sarebbono manegiate da Turchi, e come tuttavia in gran parte si essercita. Onde non è di porre alcuna difficoltà esser più convenevole ritrovarsi il traffico appresso gli Hebrei che de Turchi, fra l'altre ragioni, in particolare v'è questa, per li disavantaggi ch'hanno li sudditi negoziando con Turchi.

Il negotio di Morea della seta sarebbe tutto de Greci sudditi al Turcho, ch'havendo ivi amplissime possessioni accadarebbe l'istesso ch'a forastieri di Ponente habbiamo di già evidentemente mostrato. Il traffico delle Smire si conserva tuttavia in gran parte in mano de cittadini. **[18r]** La contrattatione di Sorìa, non è al proposito per gli Hebrei per una grave imposta sopra le loro mercantie da Turchi instituita. La scala d'Alessandria per le straordinarie gravezze e spese, non è troppo frequentata dagli Hebrei se non da quelli che personalmente vi si transferiscono, et è traffico di ventura, e non di sicurezza di mantenervi sopra, li dispendii domesticii, di modo che né anco li cittadini, che traffico in Levante non ricevono dalla contrattatione degli Hebrei danno di momento considerabile.

around the port of Spalato,<sup>49</sup> where all the merchandise converges, not only from Europe but also from Asia via land route, there is no doubt that if [this branch of commerce] had not fallen into the hands of the Jews, it would certainly have been managed by the Turks, who nevertheless play a large role. It is also easily acknowledged that it is more convenient for trade to be in the hands of the Jews rather than controlled by the Turks; among other reasons, this is true for the particular disadvantages that [Venetian] subjects have when trading with the Turks.

The silk trade of Morea would be entirely controlled by Greek subjects of the Turks.<sup>50</sup> For since the Turks have very extensive possessions in Greece, the same thing would occur that we have clearly shown is the case for foreigners from the West. Trade with Izmir,<sup>51</sup> however, is kept largely in the hands of Venetian citizens. **[18r]** Trade with Syria is not viable for Jews because the Turks have imposed a heavy tax on silk. Similarly, Jews do not regularly frequent the port of Alexandria, except for those who personally move there, because of extraordinary taxes and expenses. [In addition,] it is a risky and unsafe trade that cannot compensate for domestic expenses. As a result, not even Venetian citizens who trade in the East suffer any considerable losses due to the trade carried out by Jews.

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**49** Spalato, “Spljet,” or “Split”, the main trading centre in Dalmatia. See Ravid, *Economics*, 33 and n. 28; id., “A Money-Lender (1592) and a Ghetto (1777–1778): New Light on Venetian Spalato and Its Jews,” in *Non solo verso Oriente. Studi sull’ebraismo in onore di Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini*, ed. Maddalena Del Bianco Cotrozzi, Riccardo Di Segni, and Marcello Massenzio, 2 vols. (Florence: Olschki, 2014), 1: 395–415.

**50** For the role of the Jews in silk trade with Morea (currently known as the Peloponnese peninsula), see Luca Molà, *The Silk Industry of Renaissance Venice* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2000).

**51** According to Lattes (*Ma’amar*, 158 n. 21), Smire is probably Ismir. For Jewish trade in Smyrna, see David B. Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 29.

## CONSIDERATIONE IV

### *Che gli Hebrei siano idonei sopra modo al negotio*

Reclama il comune degli huomini che la natura li habbi incaricati, e vessati d'urgen-  
tie, e necessità in gran copia più che agli altri animali privi di ragione. Ma contra  
dovere si lamenta, perché l'indigenza, et il bisogno sono li veri stimuli, et impulsivi  
all'inventioni, e ritrovamenti dell'arti più degne, et eccellenti, che tanto nobilitano  
il genere humano. Ove l'esperienza dimostra che li meridionali per la clemenza del  
loro cielo, e fertilità di terreni si trovano quasi privi d'ogni industria, ma li setten-  
trionali dal rigore del clima, e sterilità del suolo spronati con la [18v] navigatio|ne,  
et essercitio dell'arti, sono divenuti celebri e famosi. Et alcuna volta mi arreccò me-  
raviglia che li Romani conforme alla loro falsa superstitione di errigere altari, e  
deificare gl'inventori delle giovevoli professioni, e che insino la Fortuna, stimata  
pure da loro cieca e temeraria, trovò in Roma particolare adoratione, et apritura di  
molti sontuosi tempj, al bisogno primo stimolatore e sferzatore all'imprese degne,  
e profittevoli inventioni, non li fosse giamai da essi instituito culto, né verso di lui  
osservato alcun rito religioso.

Nela scola del disaggio sotto la rigorosa disciplina di esso bisogno, sono eruditi,  
et instruiti li Hebrei più che ogni altra natione, essendo privi di beni stabili, senz'es-  
sercitio delle arti mecaniche, lontani da proffitti del foro, e d'altri impieghi urbani,  
carichi di famiglia essendoli anco per loro riti proibito il celibato, onde li conviene  
con industrie diligenza, et accurata vigilanza aprirsi la via al proprio mantenimento,  
e sovenimento. Per il che si osserva che ove sono dimorati gli Hebrei vi fiorì il traffi-  
co et il negotio,

## CONSIDERATION IV

### *That the Jews are Well-Suited for Trade*

The majority of men deplore the fact that nature has encumbered them with obligations and necessities in greater abundance than other animals who are deprived of reason.<sup>52</sup> But these men have no legitimate grounds to complain, because poverty and necessity are the true incentives that result in the invention and discovery of the most worthy and excellent arts that so ennoble the human race. Whereby experience demonstrates that southerners, because of the clemency of their skies and the fertility of their lands, are almost deprived of all industriousness. Northerners, however, as a result of the rigorous climate and the sterility of the soil, are propelled to [18v] navigation, and to practising arts, [with the result that] they have become celebrated and famous. I sometimes marvel that the Romans kept their false superstitions and erected altars to deify the inventors of worthwhile professions – to such an extent that they even consecrated many sumptuous temples to Fortuna.<sup>53</sup> Although they deemed it blind and reckless, [Fortuna] found [itself] [to be] the object of special adoration and of the opening of many sumptuous temples in Rome. [Yet, the Romans] never chose to devote a cult nor to observe any religious ritual to necessity, which seems to be the primary stimulus of worthy undertakings and profitable inventions.

From the school of hardship, under the rigorous discipline of necessity, the Jews, more than any other nation, emerged erudite and trained; for they are not allowed to own real estate, nor may they engage in mechanical trades, or benefit from courts of law or other civic offices; furthermore, they are also burdened with families, since their rites forbid celibacy to them. Thus, they need to pave their own way with industry, diligence, and vigilance in order to support and maintain themselves. Accordingly, one sees that where Jews have resided, trade and business

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52 On the concept of necessity as a key word in Machiavelli's political philosophy, a comprehensive bibliography is available. We will mention only Maurizio Viroli, *Machiavelli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) and Filippo Del Lucchese, "'Quando altri non ci insegnasse, che la necessità c'insegna.' Strategie della virtù tra necessità e libertà in Machiavelli," *Quaderni materialisti* 1 (2002): 41–67, n. 2, which also provides the readers with further bibliographical information. On the comparison between man and animals and the issue of rationality in Luzzatto, see Anna Lissa, "La zooantropologia scettica nella visione luzzattiana del gran teatro del mondo," in *Filosofo e Rabbino nella Venezia del Seicento: Studi su Simone Luzzatto con documenti inediti dall'Archivio di Stato di Venezia*, ed. Giuseppe Veltri (Ariccia: Aracne, 2015), 91–182, especially 53–167.

53 Luzzatto is possibly echoing Machiavelli, *Discourses*, vol. I, 324: "Among the reasons he brings forward, he proves by the Romans' admission that they attributed all their victories to Fortune, since they built more temples to Fortune than to any other god."

come Livorno ne può fare attestatione. E la città di Venetia giamai porrà in oblio la memoria del primo inventore della scala di Spalatro, che fu hebreo di natione, che con suoi raccordi transportò il negotio di gran **[19r]** parte di Levante in la città, giudicata hora detta scala il più fermo, e solido fondamento di traffico ch'habbia la città, prevalendo tale inviamiento agli altri, quanto molto più stabile, e meno esposta all'ingiurie della fortuna è la terra che il mare.

Ma quello è notabile, circa li capitali d'altri Hebrei, che sotto dominii alieni si ricoverono, che come ho accenato nella precedente consideratione, che in gran somma si rimettono alli Hebrei della città li padroni de quali si sodisfano d'ogni poco d'utile, et emolumento che ne traggono, poiché non li ricapitano a Venetia per vantaggio di utili che più in questa piazza, ch'in altra ne sperano, ma solamente per evitare quelli pericoli che ritenendoli appresso di loro agevolmente li potrebbero occorrere. Ma quelli che hanno altr'impieghi oltre al mercantare, per ogni lieve diminutione di guadagno nel traffico, si distolgono da esso, e si essercitano in altre occupationi di maggior proffitto.

have flourished, as the case of Livorno can attest.<sup>54</sup> And the city of Venice will never forget the first creator of the port of Spalato, who was a Jew by birth, and who, as a result of his commercial connections, diverted the trade of a great [19r] part of the East to the city.<sup>55</sup> This port is now deemed the most solid foundation of trade the city possesses, prevailing over all other routes, just as the mainland is much safer and less exposed to the ravages of fortune than the sea.<sup>56</sup>

But what is notable with regard to the capital of Jews who have taken refuge under foreign rule in other places, as mentioned in the preceding consideration,<sup>57</sup> is that for the most part they have put it into the hands of the Jews of Venice. The masters of this capital are satisfied with any small profit and reward they receive from their capital, since they do not send [their money] to Venice for the possible advantages they hope to receive from this market over others, but rather to avoid those dangers that could easily befall them if they kept their capital with them. But those who are employed in other businesses besides trade withdraw from it at the slightest diminution of profits and engage in more lucrative occupations.

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54 The author is referring to the *Costituzione Livornina* of 1593. Accordingly, see Renzo Toaff, *La nazione ebrea a Livorno e a Pisa (1591–1700)* (Florence: Olschki, 1990), 419–35; Francesca Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment: Livornese Jews, Tuscan Culture, and Eighteenth-Century Reform* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

55 Luzzatto is referring to Daniel Rodriga, see glossary. See Lattes, *Ma'amar*, 158 n. 22; Renzo Paci, *La scala di Spalato e il commercio veneziano nei Balcani fra Cinque e Seicento* (Venice: Deputazione di storia patria per le Venezie, 1971); Ravid, “Introduction to the Charters,” 207–212, and Benjamin Ravid, “Venice, Adriatic Commerce, and Jewish Merchants: Sixteen Memoranda of Daniel Rodriga,” in *Studi sul mondo sefardita: In memoria di Aron Leoni*, ed. Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini, Michele Luzzatti, and Michele Sarfatti (Florence: Leo Olschki, 2011), 107–126. On Spalato, see additionally Benjamin Ravid, “A Money-Lender (1592) and a Ghetto (1777–1778), 395–400. Menasseh ben Israel virtually translated this passage from the *Discourse*, integrating into it Luzzatto’s further observations regarding Livorno on folio 21r, below: “And so’t is observed, that wheresoever they go to dwell, there presently the Traficq begins to flourish. Which may be seen in divers places, especially in Ligorne, which having been but a very ignoble and inconsiderable City, is at this time, by the great concourse of people, one of the most famous places of Trafique of whole Italy. Furthermore, the Inventor of the famous *Scala de Spalatro* (the most firme and solid Traficq of Venice) was a Jew, who by this his Invention [the Italian *raccordi* which Menasseh translated as “invention” refers to the memoranda-petitions that Rodriga submitted to the Venetian government] transported the Negotiation from a great part of the Levant into that City”; see Menasseh Ben Israel, *To His Highness the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland. The Humble Addresses of Menasseh Ben Israel, a Divine, and Doctor of Physick, in behalf of the Jewish Nation, in Menasseh Ben Israel’s Mission of Oliver Cromwell Being a Reprint of the Pamphlets Published by Menasseh Ben Israel to Promote the Re-admission of the Jews to England 1649–1656*, ed. Lucien Wolf (London: Macmillan & Co., 1901), 75–103, 82.

56 The Venetian government appreciated the role of the Jewish merchants in the development of Spalato and the increase in Venetian trade; for two examples, see Ravid, “An Introduction to the Charters,” 215, 218.

57 See consideration III, 16v–17r.



Ma discendendo ancora in tale proposito al particolare è cosa notoria appresso li negotianti, che in tre modi si atraeno li traffici in una città, e massime maritima: l'uno, per causa della propria navigatione, ché coloro, che sono possessori di vascelli, sono parimenti arbitri delle mercantie, **[19v]** come si scorge nelli Fiamenghi, secondo, con transferirsi personalmente in diverse piazze, ch'in tal maniera si contrahe amistà e corrispondenza, terzo, mandando li proprii capitali in diversi lochi, e così s'invita, et alletta altrui di reciprocamente rimmettere, e rimandare alla città le loro proprie facoltà.

In quanto alla navigatione de proprii vascelli gli Hebrei ne sono quasi affatto privi, benché in Amstradamo, Retrodamo, et Amburgo vi ne sono alcuni partecipi di vascelli. Circa al viaggiare, e formare nuove pratiche, l'Hebreo ad alcun altro non cede, non havendo occasione di trattenersi nella propria patria per coltivare terreni, over'altri esercitii urbani che l'impediscono. Vi si aggiunge l'essere molti in famiglia non admettendo il celibato, onde compartendosi alcun'alle cure domestiche, gli altri facilmente s'impiegano nelle peligrinationi di lunghi viaggi, onde introducono nuovi negotii da paesi stranieri, e remoti, nelle città ove hanno posto nel principio il loro domicilio.

Nel mandare poi il loro capitale per il mondo, l'Hebreo più ch'ogni altro può ciò praticare non solo per cagione dell'urgente bisogno che lo stimula di tentare per ogni mezzo il favore della fortuna, ma per havere le sue facoltà non investite in beni stabili, ma in danari contanti, e mercantie, che perciò sono allestite, e disposte **[20r]** di esser traghettate, e rimmesse ove più gli agrada, e li piace. Et è degno d'osservatione di quanto utile apporta quest'ultimo modo praticato in tutto quel tratto di terra ferma che giace tra Dalmatia e Costantinopoli, et altri lochi del dominio turchesco, ove non vi fa residenza alcun consolo veneto come nell'altre scale di Levante, che vi dimorano publici rappresentanti, ché non compirebbe alli Venetiani di mandare li loro capitali in mano de Turchi, overo Greci sudditi d'essi Turchi, né anco alli loro proprii corrispondenti per quelli pericoli, e pregiudittii, ch'in tali lochi facilmente li potrebbe occorrere, non havendo ivi alcun protetore che li diffenda dall'insulti di quelle genti.

Ma gli Hebrei o spinti dalla necessità del vivere, overo havendo altri Hebrei, anzi la maggior portione della loro natione suddita al Turcho, arditamente vi capitano con le persone, e vi rimettono le loro facoltà, et haveri. E non è dubbio che le peregrinationi, et il transferirsi delle persone, è l'atrativo de traffichi, e benché non si può negare che la temperie dell'aria, e situationi de paesi, siano gran dispositioni a comertii e negotii, tuttavia il volontario concorso, et alettamento degli huomini n'è efficacissima cagione.

However, delving [deeply] into the subject at hand in terms of the particular details, it is well-known among merchants that commerce is attracted to cities, particularly the maritime ones, in three ways. First, because those who owned ships were masters of trade, [19v] as occurred among the Flemish. Second, by personally travelling to different centres of commerce, since by so doing one would form friendships and contacts. Third, by sending one's capital to various places, and thereby inviting and inducing others to reciprocate and to have their own riches sent to the city.

With regard to ships, the Jews are almost entirely deprived of them, although in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Hamburg there are some who share ownership of ships. With regard to travelling and establishing new relationships, [however,] the Jews are second to none, for they do not have the opportunity to stay in their own country to cultivate the land or to engage in other urban professions that would impede them. In addition, since celibacy is not permitted, families are large, and thus some devote themselves to domestic cares, while others easily employ themselves in the ramblings of long voyages by which they can introduce new trade from foreign and distant countries to the cities where they initially set up residence.

As for trading by sending their capital abroad, Jews, more than any other people, are able to do this not only because of their urgent need, which induces them to test fortune by every means available, but also because their riches are not invested in real estate, but in cash and merchandise. Thus, [their wealth] is predisposed and ready [20r] to be sent to more suitable and fortunate places. It is worthwhile to note how useful this latter practice is for the whole stretch of the mainland that lies between Dalmatia and Constantinople, and the other places of Turkish rule where no Venetian Consul resides. Conversely, public representatives reside in the Eastern ports, because it would be inconvenient for the Venetians to send their capital to the Turks, or the Greeks, who are Turkish subjects, or even to their own correspondents, because of the dangers and risks that could easily befall them, not having any protector to defend them against the threats of other peoples.

But the Jews are driven either by the necessity to survive or by the fact that other Jews reside in Turkish lands – indeed, the greater part of their Nation resides there.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, they dare to personally go abroad and invest their money and possessions in these very places. There is no doubt that the wandering and transference of people is one of the main incentives of trade. And even though one certainly cannot deny that the mildness of the air and the location of the countries are of great importance for commerce and trade, the strongest incentive seems to be that people come either of their own free will or because they feel enticed to do so.

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58 On the subject of merchant communities, see Mauro, "Merchant Communities 1350–1750," 285.

Il primo huomo dal qual trasse origine tutta la posterità del suo genere, fu formato nella temperata regione **[20v]** orientale, e nelle delitie del Paradiso. Non dimeno la sua progenie si partì da quel sito, come attesta la Scrittura. *Cum proficis- serentur de Oriente invenerunt campum in terra Sennear, et habitaverunt in eo*,<sup>21</sup> si allontanarono da quella regione havendo in essa ricevuta prima l'espulsione dal paradiso e poi il diluvio ch'annichilò quasi affatto tutti gli viventi, tanto più sono risentiti gli huomini dall'offese, che memori de benefitii.

Et è cosa certa come disse quell'oratore appresso Tucidide gli huomini produrre le fortune, e non queste quelli. Voglio dire al nostro proposito, che gli huomini guidono li commercii ove gli agrada, e ne sono affatto arbitri. In quante maniere flutuò, e fu aggitato il negotio, e trasporto delle spetiarie, hora in Alessandria d'Egitto, hora in Damiata, hora in Damasco, et altre volte in Aleppo, capitando esse poi al Mare Caspio, e da indi infino alla Moscovia, et altre volte alla Tanna, e per diverse vie capitavano poi a Venetia, ove si compartivano alle regioni occidentali dell'Europa.

Al tempo presente si è ridotto tal trafico appresso Portughesi, Flamenghi, et Inglesi, così il comercio del danaro d'Europa alcun tempo capitò a Bisenzone di Borgogna, a Lione di Francia, e da indi in Anversa, et hoggidì Amstradamo in quelle regioni settentrionali per il concorso de mercanti, e divenuta celeberrimo emporio **[21r]** d'Europa a nostri tempi.

Le lane spagnuole capitavano prima a Venetia, che a Genova, e Livorno, benché tanto vicini sono alla Spagna, hoggi da quelli lochi si conducono alla città. Hierì si può dire il giro del danaro d'Italia, e fuori di lei si faceva a Piacenza, hora gran parte ridotto a Verona, è poco tempo che Tripoli era la principal scala di Soria, hora a penna vi capita nel corso anuale una Tartanella<sup>22</sup>, et il tutto è divoluto ad Aleppo, et Alessandretta. Raguggi, e Narenta, forno scale delle caravane turchesche per l'Italia, hora si è ridotto a Spalatro.

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<sup>21</sup> Genesis 11:2: "Cumque proficiscentur de oriente, invenerunt campum in terra Senaar, et habitaverunt in eo."

<sup>22</sup> Tartanella, si tratta di un'imbarcazione da pesca piccola e leggera, si veda Piero Bevilacqua, *Venezia e le acque. Una metafora planetaria* (Roma: Donzelli Editore, 1998), 62 e bibliografia ivi citata.

The first man, who was the origin of the entire human race, was created in the temperate [20v] Eastern region and amidst the delights of Paradise.<sup>59</sup> Nonetheless, his progeny left that place, as the Scripture attests: “As they journeyed east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.”<sup>60</sup> That is, they journeyed far from that region, having first experienced expulsion from Paradise and then the Flood, which annihilated almost all living beings. Men resent offences more strongly than they remember past benefits.

According to the orator in Thucydides, it is certain that men produce fortunes and not vice versa.<sup>61</sup> In the context of our discussion, I mean that men conduct commerce where it pleases them; they are trade’s undisputed arbiters. Commerce and the transport of spices fluctuated and wavered in many ways, now in Alexandria, in Egypt, now in Damietta, now in Damascus, and at other times in Aleppo. Finally, they ended up at the Caspian Sea, and were taken from there to Moscow and at other times to Tanais,<sup>62</sup> and by different routes they finally arrive in Venice, whence they leave again for the western regions of Europe.

At present, such traffic has been left to the Portuguese, the Flemish, and the English. And thus the flow of European capital in the past went from Besançon in Burgundy,<sup>63</sup> Lyon in France, from there to Antwerp, and today to Amsterdam in those northern regions, [which] has grown into the most celebrated emporium [21r] of Europe because of its network of merchants.

Spanish wool used to arrive in Venice first rather than in Genoa and Livorno, despite the fact that these two cities are closer to Spain. Today, they come from those places to Venice. Yesterday, one could say that the circulation of money inside and outside Italy was concentrated mainly in Piacenza; a great part of this same business has now gone to Verona. Only a while ago, Tripoli was the main port of Syria, and now hardly a small fishing vessel arrives there in the course of a year; everything has moved to Aleppo and Alexandretta.<sup>64</sup> Ragusa and Narenta<sup>65</sup> were ports for Turkish caravans on their way to Italy, but now their traffic has gone to Spalato.<sup>66</sup>

59 On the concept of the Orient in the history of Paradise, see Veltri, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 152–53.

60 Hebrew: ויהי, בנוסעם מקדם; וימצאו בקעה בארץ שנער, ויישבו שם.

61 See the Melian Dialogue in Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* V:88–111.

62 See Lorenzo Pubblici, “Venezia et il Mar d’Azov: alcune considerazioni sulla Tana nel XIV secolo,” *Archivio storico italiano* 163, no. 3 (2005): 435–48.

63 See José-Gentil da Silva and Ruggiero Romano, “L’histoire des changes: les foires de ‘Bisenzone’ de 1600 à 1650,” *Annales* 17 (1962): 715–21.

64 Nowadays Iskenderun.

65 See glossary.

66 The reason for which the Venetian government established the *scala* at Venetian-held Spalato was to concentrate there the overland land trade of the Balkans to the Adriatic and divert it away from other Dalmatian ports, and especially Ragusa, which had very close commercial relations with Ancona. As Luzzatto correctly observed, Spalato was indeed successful. For further details, see above 19r n. 55 and 56.

Livorno fu picciol, et ignobil borgo, ma dall'industria delli Gran Duchi divvene famoso mercato dell'Italia, ancorché alla transmissione delle merci sia incommodo, non havendo vicinità di fiume navigabile, né ampla pianura da potervi condurre e comunicare le mercantie, ma fra alpestri gioghi de montagne, è circuito il suo territorio, et è vicino ad altri porti più di lui sicuri, et opportuni, nulla di meno, quelli prudentissimi precipi aggevolarono le difficoltà, e spianarono l'impedimenti.

Et è cosa certa, che la maggior atratione del negotio, è la libertà del vivere, e sicurezza della possessione de proprii beni, come esatamente, e [21v] puntualmente conferisce, et osserva il dominio venetiano a suoi habitanti, e trafficanti, et è il vero stimolo alla natione a capitarvi essendo per la sua debolezza diffidentissima.

Dalle cose accenate in questa consideratione, si può concludere essere proprii delli Hebrei alcuni negotii e traffichi annessi e congiunti alle loro persone, et havere da essi necessaria dipendenza per loro industrie, inventioni, corrispondenze, e pratiche, che senza la loro coassistenza nella città affatto si perderebbono, o ch'altrove capitarebbono.

Livorno was a small and ignoble town, but because of the skilled endeavours of its grand dukes, it turned into a famous market town, even though it is unsuitable for the transfer of goods, since there is no navigable river in the vicinity nor sufficient flat land over which merchandise might be carried. On the contrary, it is surrounded by Alpine mountain passes and is close to other ports that are safer and more convenient. [Nevertheless,] those most prudent princes reduced the difficulties and smoothed away the impediments.

It is certain that the greatest attraction of trade is the liberty of life and the security of possession of one's own goods, **[21v]** precisely as the Venetian government grants and guarantees with regard to its inhabitants and merchants. [Consequently,] this is the true incentive for the Jews to settle in this city. This incentive is demonstrated all the more because the Jews always were defenceless, which made them extremely diffident.

From the matters discussed so far in this consideration, one can conclude that some trade and business transactions are connected to the presence of the Jews. Such activities are necessarily dependent upon their industriousness, inventiveness, connections, and practices, and without their residence in the city, this kind of trade would be lost, or would go elsewhere.

## CONSIDERATIONE V

### *Dell'ossequio, e prontezza dell'Hebreo nell'obedire*

Il governo tirranico ambisce l'oppressione de proprii sudditti, il reggio et aristocratico desidera la pronta ubidienza. Ma nel forastiero l'uno e li altri si contentano d'un piacevole ossequio sì per esser lui mobile, e volatile come per havere chi lo protegge e diffende dall'altrui insulti.

Ma gli Hebrei sott'ogni conditione di governo, e regimento sono sempre ossequenti, ubbidienti, e soggetti, e l'esperienza dimostra, ch'occorrendo sovente alcuna difficoltà con negotiatori per nuove impositioni, prohibitioni de navigationi, e trasporti d'alcune merci, et altre emergentie simili, [22r] l'altre nationi estere soggette ad altri precipi ricorrendo a loro ministri, e rapresentanti avviene ben spesso, che li affari meri mercantili sono da essi rafigurati come publici, e di Stato.

Ma la natione hebrea dispersa, e disseminata per il mondo, priva d'alcun capo di protetione, con pronta flessibilità si dispone sempre in conformità de publici comandi, onde si pratica bene spesso ch'essendo imposti agravii particolari alla natione non si sente da essi spirare, et esprimere un semplice ramarico.

## CONSIDERATION V

### *On the Deference and Promptness of the Jews in Obeying*

A tyrannical government seeks to oppress its own subjects, whereas royal and aristocratic rule desire swift obedience. However, both seek and are satisfied by amiable obedience from foreign subjects, first because foreign subjects are easily inclined to move and flee from the country, and second because obedience allows them to obtain safety and protection from the insults of others.

But the Jews, under every form of government and rule, have always been industrious, obedient, and inclined to remain subjected. Experience shows that often when difficulties occurred among merchants as a result of newly imposed restrictions on navigation, carrying certain goods, or similar occurrences, [22r] other foreign nations subject to other princes had recourse to their ministers and representatives. Thus, quite often, mercantile matters suddenly turned into public affairs.

The Jews, however, were always willing to obey public commands with swift compliance, for they are dispersed and scattered all over the world and deprived of any source of protection,<sup>67</sup> so that when particular taxes were imposed on them, they never dared to utter or formulate so much as a simple complaint.<sup>68</sup>

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**67** An anonymous memorandum addressed to the Venetian government in 1602, which may have only constituted a literary presentation in one of the Venetian academies, urged it not to give the Turks a Fondaco of their own. Among other things, it claimed that the concentration of many Turks in one place would further the political aims of the Turks who, headed by a Sultan and possessing great naval power, were in a position to harm Venice more than were the Jews, who were without any head or prince and everywhere repressed; see Benjamin Ravid, "Between the Myth of Venice and the Lachrymose Conception of Jewish History: The Case of the Jews of Venice," in *The Jews of Italy: Memory and Identity*, ed. Bernard Cooperman and Barbara Garvin (Bethesda, MD: University of Maryland Press, 2000), 151–92, 172.

**68** Melchior Palontrotti, in his thirteen page pamphlet *Breve Risposta a Simone Luzzatto* (Rome, 1641), apparently the only publication entirely devoted to a refutation of the *Discourse*, accused Luzzatto of making a virtue out of necessity, since the Jews had no choice but to be obedient, for the alternative was the confiscation of their property and banishment: "Dico, che non si deve chiamare riverente ossequio di suddito, quello ch  dura necessit  di legge di sciavo al Signore, che se l'Ebreo non dimostrasse prontezza nell'ubbidire, con far artificiosamente di necessit  virt  accrescerebbe l'odio & il dispreggio e ne riporterebbe il castigo di perder tutto quello che possiede & esser discacciato." On Palontrotti, see Benjamin Ravid, "Contra Judaeos in Seventeenth Century Italy: Two Responses to the *Discorso* of Simone Luzzatto by Melchior Palontrotti and Giulio Morosini," *AJS Review* 7–8 (1982–83): 303–28, especially 308–10.



## CONSIDERATIONE VI

### *Che la professione mercantile dev'esser distinta dall'altre*

La massa degli huomini mentre non fosse stata dalla prudente diligenza di legislatori, e formatori di governi civili, distinta in vari ordini, e differenti classi rassembrerebbe maggior diformità che l'antico, e decantato cahos all'imaginatione de poeti giamai rappresentasse. Socrate, e Platone, nelle loro machinate repubbliche posero tal distributione, come principale elemento delle loro politie, e l'istesso osservò il moderno inventore della *Utopia*, et il simile ancora eseguirono tutti li praticanti, come parimente Aristotile nel primo della *Politica*, ch'impiegò ogni suo [22v] spirito in riordinare, e correggere le divisioni fatte da quelli doi gran maestri dell'humanità. D'Indiani narra Diodoro, che la loro politia sopra tutte l'altre fiori per esser divisi in certe classi diverse di cittadini. In tale distintione invigiloro li Romani, havendola per fondamento del loro governo politico.

Ma la Republica Venetiana, la meglio ordinata di qualunque altra si conserva appresso la nostra memoria, con ogni puntualità sempre procurò, et osservò non solo nel triplicato ordine spettante al publico governo di comun popolo, cittadinanza, e nobiltà di far apparire, e mantenere ferma un'esata distintione d'ordini, ma ancora con indicibile industria ha diviso, e separato tutte l'arti della città ben meno che mediocri, non admettendo ch'alcuna di loro si confonda con l'altra, dalla qual distintione ne risulta tre considerabili giovamenti.

Primo, che per tal maniera si mantengono l'arti nelle loro perfettioni, anzi sempre con magior progresso migliorano, essendo ognuno attento, et occupato nella sua propria, poichè l'ultimo apice della perfetione di qualsivoglia arte, è inacessibile, ché perciò li antichi Egitii decretarono, che li figliuoli succedessero a padri nell'essercitio dell'istessa professione, non essendoli concesso ad altra trapassare.

[23r] Secondo giovamento, che per questo divieto si conserva certa concordia fra il popolo, non occupando l'uno il mestiero dell'altro, e per conseguenza si evita l'invidia, et il livore, che facilmente fra loro potrebbe occorrere, il che non avviene vivendo ognuno sopra la propria arte, e professione.

Terzo, che trovandosi il popolo diviso in più minute parti molto più agevolmente è ossequente a suoi maggiori nel ricevere loro comandi, et è meno abile alle conspirationi tumultarie, e come in altro loco si dirà,

## CONSIDERATION VI

### *Why the Mercantile Profession Ought to be Kept Apart from Others*

If prudent legislators and civil government planners had not wisely and carefully divided the multitude of men into various groups and different classes, they would resemble a greater deformity than the ancient chaos imagined by the poets. Socrates and Plato already established this partitioning as the organising principle of their policies in the commonwealths they conceived. The modern inventor of “Utopia”<sup>69</sup> similarly kept to this structural organisation of society, and so did all other statesmen. In the same way, Aristotle [too,] in the first [book] of his *Politics*,<sup>70</sup> employed all of his [22v] energy in reordering and correcting the divisions made by those two great masters of mankind. Diodorus gives an account of Indian society, arguing that it flourished above all others because they were divided into different classes of citizens.<sup>71</sup> The Romans carefully maintained this distinction as a foundation of their political government.

However, the Venetian Republic is the most well-ordered republic whose legacy is preserved in our records, since it has always maintained a careful distinction between the three estates pertaining to the public government. This order consists of the common people, the citizenry, and the nobility. With notable diligence, this republic has also kept apart the whole set of trades and occupations in the city, starting from the lowest, not allowing any of them to be confused with one another. This distinction harbours three significant advantages.

First, such an arrangement ensures the perfection of the arts. They are even continually improving, since everyone is kept busy and is preoccupied with his own craft. Since the ultimate state of perfection for which any art may strive is impossible to achieve, the ancient Egyptians decreed that sons should succeed their fathers in keeping the same profession, and did not allow them to change to another.

[23r] The second advantage is that this arrangement helps to preserve a certain harmony among the population, since no one is involved in anyone else’s profession. Thus, envy and hatred, which arise so easily among men, are avoided and do not occur because everyone lives by his own art and profession.

Third, since the people are divided into very small units, they easily turn out to be more obedient to their superiors and to the orders they receive, and thus have become less susceptible to rebellious conspiracies, as will be explained elsewhere.

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<sup>69</sup> Thomas More.

<sup>70</sup> According to Lattes (*Ma’amar*, 158 n. 27), Luzzatto is referring to the second book of the *Politics*, where Aristotle discusses the State and the constitution of society and criticises Socrates and Plato.

<sup>71</sup> Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* II:40–41.

dalli quali tre profitti si comprende quanto sia giovevole nelle populationi certa distinctione, ch'il tutto ridonde a perfettione, unione, et ubidienza.

Al proposito degli Hebrei, si può dire ch'essercitandosi nel traffico, e negotiatione, riesce molto decente esser distinta la loro professione da tutte l'altre, come importante, e di gran conseguenza, essend'essi separati dalli artigiani, essendoli 'prohibito' per publico decreto impiegarsi in alcun'arte operaria, [e] distinti da cittadini essendoli vietato il poter possedere beni stabili, e convertire in essi li loro capitali. Onde li conviene necessariamente per sostentarsi con loro famiglie, impiegar se stessi, e loro haveri nel traffico, e [23v] negotiatione per poco o molto guadagno che dalla contrattatione ne risultasse.

Onde ne derriva al publico grandissimo emolumento de datii, che in sette viaggi, che si fanno in meno de anni cinque, ascendono a somma eguale all'istesso capitale, et alle volte molto più se vogliamo includervi il datio acessorio, et obliquo che nella consideratione VIII son per dire, et anco calcolare il datio che apporta il guadagno che frutta l'istesso capitale nel progresso di detto tempo, che convertendo il proprio havere in beni stabili senza alcuna proportione sarebbe di minor utile al publico.

Ma forse dirà alcuno ch'investendo overo fabricando un palazzo benché dal stabile ne risulta al Prencipe minimo guadagno, tuttavia il danaro con il quale si merca, e si fabrica tal stabile non si disperde, ma capitando in altrui resta di nuovo disposto alla negotiatione, e di più avanza il Prencipe l'annuale agravio posto sopra il stabile. Al che si risponde ch'in quanto alle fabbriche, et edefitii di case, ducati dieci milla non può fruttare il stabile con qual'è fabricato in progresso d'anni dieci al padrone d'esso, più che ducati <doi> '4' mille a ragione di quatro per cento all'anno, et al Prencipe ducati <2> '4'00.

In quanto poi al danaro speso, è vero che realmente non si perde, tuttavia si minucciona, e tritula in sì picciol parte, e si difonde in persone [24r] lon|tanissime dalla contrattatione maritima, ch'in progresso di molti anni non si unisce a far più corpo di negotio come fiume abbondantissimo di acque, diviso in molti rami perde l'uso della navigatione, e s'inaridisce: oltra che le materie degli edefitii si mercano per il più da persone di terra ferma non applicate alla negotiatione, e traffico maritimo, et in buona parte sì questi come li operarii sono esteri, e forastieri.

In quanto poi all'investita di terreni se sono inculti v'è l'istessa difficoltà che negli edefitii. Ma se sono fruttiferi e coltivati, quelli che li vendono giamai ciò fanno per curiosità di negotio, et applicatione di traffico, ma per urgenti necessità, oltra

These three advantages illustrate how useful specific distinctions within populations are, for they all lead to perfection, union, and obedience.

With regard to the Jews, one can say that since they are committed to trade and commerce, it is [therefore] highly appropriate that their profession is kept distinct from all the others, because trade is of significant importance and impact. In fact, they are separated from the artisans due to a public decree that forbids them to be in manual lines of work. They are [furthermore] set apart from other citizens, for they are not allowed to own real estate or to invest their capital in it. So in order to maintain themselves and their families, they must necessarily employ themselves and invest their possessions in commerce and **[23v]** trade, regardless of how much or how little they have earned in these transactions.

Therefore, the treasury derives great compensation in the form of customs duties from their trade activities. From seven voyages made in less than five years, the profit would amount to the original investment made, and at times to much more, if one includes the indirect and accessory customs duties I will discuss in consideration VIII.<sup>72</sup> [One should also] calculate the customs paid on the profits that result from the same capital over the course of the aforementioned period. [To conclude,] converting one's possessions into real estate would be of far less gain to the public.

Still, one might argue that although investing the money into buying or building a palace would provide very low profits for the prince, the very process of buying and building would keep the money in circulation. In fact, once it is in the hands of others, it again becomes available for commerce, and in addition, the prince raises the annual tax placed on real estate. One could respond that in ten years the 10,000 ducats spent on the building of the palace would not yield the owner more than 4,000 ducats at a rate of 4 per cent per year. As for the prince, he would receive four hundred ducats per year.

As for the money directly invested in the building, it would not really be lost. Instead it would be divided into such small parts, and scattered among people **[24r]** so distant from the maritime trade, that over a period of many years one could not even gather it together to expand trading. [This seems] like a very abundant river divided into many branches, thus losing its navigability and drying up. In addition, the building materials are generally handled by individuals predominantly living in the counties of the mainland, who do not work in the maritime trade, while a good many of the workers are outsiders and foreigners.

Concerning the investment in land, if the territories were uncultivated one would have the same difficulties as with buildings. But when land is fertile and cultivated, those who sell it never do so out of an interest in trade or a dedication to commerce, but [driven] by urgent necessity. In addition, one needs to consider

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<sup>72</sup> See consideration VIII, 29r. Luzzatto estimates that the import tax paid by the Jews on raw materials amounts to two-thirds of the export tax they pay on the manufactured goods, i.e., 47,000 ducats.

ch'in buona parte sono gente mediteranea distratta dalla contrattatione. E siccome per occasione dell'edefitii di case, palazzi, e coltura di terreni il danaro amassato si diffonde in beneficio d'alcuni, così ancora per via del traffico, con maggiore distributione, si impiega a proffitto d'assai numero de persone.

L'impiego della fabrica d'un edefitio, finito che sia cessa per molto tempo il guadagno alli artefici et edeficatori; ma li emolumenti che rissultano ad altrui per il traffico, continua in sin tanto che si mantiene il capitale, arreccando trattenimento, e guadagno ad ogni sorte de arteggiano, sensali, scrittori, notaii, causidici, padroni [24v] di fondachi. E quello importa più che mantiene li vascelli, e la peritia di naviganti, e marinari cosa di tanto ornamento, et utile ne' tempi di pace e così necessaria in occasione di guerra. Dal che si conclude, ch'il mantenere la professione mercantile distinta, non è meno utile al Prencipe, di quell'è al privato, et a niuno nocivo, e danevole.

E credo che nel corpo civile rassembra l'Hebreo quella parte del piede, che calpesta la terra la quale essendo inferiore a tutti gli altri membri a niun di loro è di agravio, ma li sostiene ancora. E ciò dico ch'essendo all'Hebreo interdetto qualunque professione, eccetto il mercantare, non apporta alcun danno a qualunque stato di persona, né ad artigiani, né a forestieri né di molto aggravio all'istessi mercanti, cittadini, che per il più negotiano nel Levante come nella consideratione III ho dimostrato, ma sostiene numero grande de artisti, e professori che sovengano al bisogno degli Hebrei sì per servitio de loro proprie persone, come anco per il traffico, e negotiatione essendo agl'istessi Hebrei prohibito qualunque tal essercitio.

that to a great extent these are Mediterranean people with little interest in trade.<sup>73</sup> And while the money gained both from the building of houses and palaces and through the cultivation of land is dispersed for the benefit of a few, it would be more widely distributed by means of trade because a greater number of people would profit from it.

Once the building is finished, architects and builders cease to profit from it, while the gain for others resulting from trade continues as long as the capital is maintained, bringing support and profit for every type of artisan, agent, writer, notary, counsellor, or owner [24v] of an emporium. It is even more important [to stress] that maritime trade maintains both the vessels and the skills of navigators and mariners, an issue of such distinction and valour in times of peace and so necessary in times of war. From this, one can conclude that keeping a distinct mercantile profession is as useful to the prince as it is to any private individual, and it neither hurts nor damages anyone.

I believe that in the civic body, a Jew would resemble that part of the foot that treads upon the earth and, in spite of being lower than all the other parts of the body, is not a burden to any of them, but rather supports them. And I argue so given that a Jew is prohibited from any profession other than trade. [Therefore,] neither artisans nor foreigners would be harmed. It would not cause much of a burden to the merchants and citizens either, since the Jews trade in the East for the most part, as I demonstrated in consideration III.<sup>74</sup> As a matter of fact, their trade supports many artisans and professionals who in return satisfy the Jews' needs with their services, because these are not allowed to be practised by the Jews themselves.

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<sup>73</sup> This is a Latin phrase designating people who live inland, far away from the sea. See Cicero, *Against Verres* II:5,70: "Homines maxime mediterraneos."

<sup>74</sup> See consideration III, 17v.

## CONSIDERATIONE VII

### *Che le facultà devono esser terminate, e girative*

[25r] Incombe ad ottimo, e provido politico procurare, che li beni, e ricchezze della città con giusta proportionem geometrica conforme alle regole della giustitia distributiva siano divise, e compartite in fra li suoi cittadini in modo ch'alcuno delli membri della città con atrahere a sé la maggior parte de guadagni non restano gli altri esauisti, e meschini, monstro non men difforme nello stato civile, di quello avvenirebbe nel corpo dell'animale, onde Aristotile nel V della *Politica*: *maxime vero lege, ita providere conandum est, ut nemini sit excessiva potentia, neque amicorum, neque pecuniarum.*

Oltra che l'esorbitante opulenza dell'uno, e disperata povertà, et indigenza degli altri, minacciarebbono tumulti, e spirarebbono seditioni, anzi molte volte incontrandosi, e copulandosi insieme queste due estremità, sono il sconcerto del stato civile. Onde Salomone ne Proverbii, capitolo 22: *Dives, et pauper, inter se occurrunt utriusque operator est Dominus*,<sup>23</sup> quasi volesse dire, ch'il ricco opulente, et il povero indigente, molte volte insieme s'incontrano, e combinano a guisa ch'il secco s'unisce con l'umido, e l'appetisce, et insieme si conglutina, il che [25v] tutto rissulta dalla Divina Provvidenza, che vuole alterare il stato degli huomini. Né in alcun altro modo più agevolmente può accadere tal incongruità, e sproportione, che per mezzo del traffico, e negotiatione, che maneggiate con vigilanza, e prudenza, con l'esser secondate da buona fortuna è agevole arricchire sopra modo, et in eccesso sollevare la conditione di qualunque ch'in esse si essercita, e con più d'un esempio si potrebbe rappresentare la verità di tale avvenimento.

Ma il volere con rigore ridurre li haveri a segno di moderata proportionem, fu impresa sin hora desiderata, ma non giamai praticata, e massime l'uguaglianza de beni mobili, e danari contanti, e se fu alcuna volta attentata nelli beni stabili riuscì sempre con infelice successo, le leggi di Falea circa la divisione de beni, vivono solamente nell'oppugnationi di Aristotile nel secondo della *Politica*, nel resto poi sepolte nell'oblio. L'egual divisione della Terra Santa fra Hebrei

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23 Proverbia 22:2: "Dives et pauper obviaverunt sibi utriusque operator est Dominus."

## CONSIDERATION VII

### *Wealth Ought to Be Limited and [Kept] in Circulation*

[25r] The best, most cautious politician has the duty of ensuring that the wealth and resources of the city are divided and distributed among the citizens into suitable mathematical proportions according to the rules dictated by distributive justice.<sup>75</sup> This must be done in such a way that even when some members of the city acquire the greater part of the profits, the others are not subject to deprivation and poverty. [A civil state that deprived its people of their share of resources] would be monstrous and comparable to an animal's body; as Aristotle states in book V of the *Politics*: “*Especially should the laws provide against any one having too much power, whether derived from friends or money.*”<sup>76</sup>

In addition, the exorbitant opulence of the former, and the desperate poverty and need of the latter, would provoke upheaval and inspire sedition. Indeed, these two extremes have met many times in the past, and the concurrence has always resulted in disturbances to the civil state. As Solomon stated in Proverbs, chapter 22: “*The rich and the poor meet together – the Lord is the maker of them all.*”<sup>77</sup> It is as if he meant to say that the rich man and the poor man frequently meet one another and join together just as dryness encounters humidity and consequently stimulates it, and finally merges with it, all [25v] of which result from Divine providence, which aspires to alter the state of men. Such incongruity and disproportion do not occur by traffic and trade any more than they do from other ways. When they are managed vigilantly and prudently and with the help of good fortune, traffic and trade can easily make people extremely wealthy and dramatically raise the circumstances of anyone who risks undertaking them. Numerous examples demonstrate the truth of this claim.

However, the aspiration to a rigorous reduction of one's possessions to a moderate size has been considered a desirable undertaking to this day, but it is hardly ever practised, especially with regard to the equal distribution of moveable assets and cash. Whenever this was attempted with real estate, the result was, for the most part, unsuccessful. The laws of Phaleas regarding the division of goods have only survived in Aristotle's attacks in the second book of the *Politics*;<sup>78</sup> otherwise they have sunk into oblivion. The equal subdivision of the Holy Land among the ancient

75 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* V:2 (1130b30–1131a9).

76 Aristotle, *Politics* V:8 (1308b16–17). Luzzatto used the Latin translation by the Florentine humanist Leonardo Bruni: *Aristotelis Stagiritae Politicorum sive de Republica Libri octo. Leonardo Aretino interprete cum D. Thomae Aquinatis Explanatione* (Venetiis: Apud Iuntas, 1568), book 5, lectio 7, 79v: “*Maxime vero lege ita providere conandum est ut nemini sit excessiva potentia, neque amicorum neque pecuniarum.*”

77 Hebrew: עושה כולם יהוה; עשיר ורש נפגשו.

78 Aristotle, *Politics* II:6 (1266a33–b4).



fu senza seditione essequita, ma perché occorse nella loro prima introductione, e subito per l'ineguaglianza de figliuoli con poco frutto, si rese vana. Fu interdetto a loro re il moltiplicare, et augumentare ricchezze, ma non vi fu posto limite e termine spetiale, come nel Deuteronomio si legge.

Le leggi agrarie furono piuttosto seminarii [26r] de tumulti appresso li Romani, che correzioni de disordini, la ragione è che non si può altrimenti arrestare il felice corso de avventurati, se non per vie a loro insensibili, et inosservabili, ch'altrimenti ogni provisione se li rappresenta violente estorsione, et invidioso livore, oltra ch'in tal modo se distorna l'industria degli huomini, e li devia dalli loro cominciati progressi, essendo sospinti da fervente desiderio di estendere all'infinito le loro fortune, non fatturando l'humana avidità, li sognati mondi di Democrito.

È ben vero che la Republica in alcune professioni particolari ha proveduto a simili disordini, limitando il numero de panni a lanaiuoli, e le quantità de tellari a setaiuoli, acciocché a tutti li sia compartito li lavoranti, et operarii, ma circa l'essercitio mercantile in universale non vi è stato giamai deliberato cosa alcuna, essend'impresa per se stessa impossibile, et impraticabile.

In quanto agli Hebrei, senza ch'alcuno vi provvede, avviene che prosperando alcuni de loro ne traffici, giamai li è possibile di arrivare a segno di ricchezza, che sia straordinario, e pregiudiziale ad alcuno. Ma all'influsso de loro avventurati progressi, subito succede a pari passo il reflusso de loro scadimenti, e ciò risulta per non poter essi possedere beni stabili, che sono li tenaci vincoli, che [26v] arrestano, e fermano la volubilità dell'human fortune. Vi si aggiunge il rito d'amogliarsi ognuno di loro, e perciò moltiplicare in famiglia, che gli apporta gravi dispendii, e minuta divisione de loro haveri, oltr' il solito mancamento dell'industria ne figliuoli de ben aggiati cessando il stimolo del bisogno, e vessati dal lusso, ordinario satelliti delle comodità.

Vi concorre anco le gravezze ordinarie, e straordinarie, imposte alla natione, dalli quali accidenti, ne segue, ch'in brevissimo tempo a guisa di baleno, le loro facultà spariscono, in maniera tale, che li loro haveri, e facultà, sono sempre mobili, e girativi, né mai fissi, e permanenti. E la esperienza lo dimostra, per il corso d'anni

Jews was executed peacefully, but only because it happened upon their first entering it. The division was challenged due to the imbalance caused by [a different number of] sons, and it became fruitless and vain. The kings were forbidden to multiply and increase their riches, but no limitations or special terms were placed upon them, as one can read in Deuteronomy.<sup>79</sup>

The agrarian laws sowed [26r] discontent among the Romans rather than correcting the disorder. The reason for this is that one can only stop the happy exploits of adventurers by means that are invisible and that go unnoticed by them, since otherwise every provision appears to them to be a violent extortion and a form of selective malevolence. Furthermore, by acting this way, the industriousness of men is distracted and they are diverted from any further progress, for they are urged on by a fervent desire to infinitely increase their fortunes. For human greed does not take into account that the worlds of Democritus are only a dream.<sup>80</sup>

It is true that the Venetian Republic has provided remedies for comparable irregularities in specific professions by limiting the number of clothes for wool makers, and the quantity of looms for silk manufacturers, so that all of them can divide the workers and labourers amongst themselves. But with regard to the mercantile trade in general, nothing has been contemplated so far, for it would be an impossible and unfeasible undertaking.

As for the Jews, although some of them prosper in trade, it would never be possible for them, without the intervention of others, to arrive at a level of wealth that might seem extraordinary or dangerous to anyone. When they make progress in their fortunes, their decline immediately follows at the same rate, because of their inability to possess real estate, which is the tenacious bond that [26v] prevents and impedes the volatility of human fortune. Their fortunes are also thwarted by the common practice among the Jews of taking a wife and raising a family, which incurs great expense and results in the fragmentation of their possessions. The children of wealthy Jews exhibit the usual absence of industry, wealth ending the stimulus for need, and idleness originating from luxury which are usually connected to comfort.

The imposition of ordinary and extraordinary tolls upon the Jewish Nation must also be taken into account, so that in a very short time, like a bolt of lightning, their wealth disappears. In this way, their possessions and wealth are always in flux and in circulation, and never fixed or permanent. Experience shows that for the past

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<sup>79</sup> Deuteronomy 17:14–20, especially 17:17.

<sup>80</sup> This is a tentative translation based on the rendition of the problematic Italian verb *fatturare* with “calculating, taking into account.” Essentially, Luzzatto is comparing the infinite expansion of human greed to the infinite worlds of Democritus. Given the opportunity, it would also expand to those infinite worlds, if they were not a dream. The following is another possible translation: “For human greed is as infinite as the infinite worlds envisioned by Democritus are.” Lattes interprets the passage as follows: “For human greed will never be satisfied, not even by the infinite worlds envisioned by Democritus” (Lattes, *Ma’amar*, 96).

cento giamai essersi partiti dalla città Hebrei, che fossero opulenti, e ricchi, ma sempre doppo il totale descapito de loro haveri, e facoltà, et a guisa del mare, solito di riggettare a lidi le cose lievi, e ritenersi le sode, e gravi, ha parimente la città per suo costume d'escomiare da sé gli abbatutti, e disfatti, et abbracciare gli aggiati, et oppulenti, e si è osservato, che quasi mai alcuna mediocre ricchezza d'Hebrei è trapassata il secondo grado di posterità.

one hundred years, wealthy and affluent Jews have never left Venice. On the contrary, only those who have lost all their possessions have left the city. Like the sea, which casts light objects upon the shores and retains those that are solid and heavy, so too the city evicts the ruined and defeated while embracing the rich and the wealthy. It has been observed that hardly ever have any moderate riches belonging to Jews been passed down beyond the second generation.

## CONSIDERATIONE VIII

### *Delli profitti, et utili ch'apporta la nazione, calculandoli distintamente*

[27r] Li dominii, e regni siccome il nostro esser, si costituiscono da tre parti principali, da spirito, et anima che li regge, che sono li Prencipi, e consiglieri di Stato, che provegono a pubblici affari, da organi, e membri ch'essercitano gli impulsi, e moti che li sono ordinati dalla parte dominante, quali sono li ministri reggi, e magistrati subordinati, e la soldatesca che eseguiscano li comandi de loro superiori, conforme la graduatione de loro offitii, e fontioni.

Vi è poi il sangue, et altri umori a lui congiunti, benché conforme la comune opinione sono inanimati, tuttavia scorrendo per tutto il corpo l'alimentano, e nutriscono. Questa portione di noi rassembrano nel Stato politico li mercanti, artigiani, e qualunque altro, che distratto dal governo politico, e fontioni pubbliche nella città si ritrovano, li quali tutti con il beneficio del danaro, che si cava dal loro traffico, et industria [27v] mantengono, e nutriscono il reggimento e governo, non meno in tempo di pace, ch'in occasione di guerra.

## CONSIDERATION VIII

### *On the Detailed Calculation of Profits and Benefits Yielded by the Jewish Nation*

[27r] Like us, [the government of] dominions and kingdoms is made up of three main parts: the spirit and soul that rule them – those are the princes and counselors of the state, who take care of public affairs; the organs and limbs – those are the royal ministers and subordinate magistrates who execute impulses and movements ordered by the ruling part; and finally the soldiers, who execute their superiors' orders according to their respective offices and functions.

[As to further vital components,] there are blood and other humours that keep body and state alive. Even though blood and humours are generally regarded as inanimate, they nonetheless run freely through the whole body, feeding and nourishing it. In a state, this portion of the body resembles the merchants,<sup>81</sup> artisans, and all the others who are not involved in the political government or public functions of the city. They all contribute, by means of the money coming from their trade and industry, [27v] to maintaining and nourishing the government no less in times of peace than in times of war.<sup>82</sup>

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**81** Bacon, *Essayes*, XIX, "Of Empire": "For their *Merchants*: They are the *Vena porta*; And if they flourish not, a Kingdome may have good Limmes, but will have empty Veines, and nourish little. Taxes ad Imposts upon them, doe seldom good to the *Kings* Revenew; For that that he wines on the Hundred, he leese in the Shire; The particular Rates being increased, but the total Bulke of Trading decreased." For Bacon and Luzzatto, see Giuseppe Veltri, "Economic and Social Arguments and the Doctrine of the Antiperistasis in Simone Luzzatto's Political Thought: Venetian Reverberations of Francis Bacon's Philosophy?" *Frühneuzeit-Info* 23 (2011): 23–32, 26. The first translation of the *Essays* was published in 1618: *Saggi morali del signore Francesco Bacono, cavagliero inglese, gran cancelliero d'Inghilterra. Con un altro (sic) suo trattato Della sapienza degli antichi* (In Londra: Appresso di Giovanni Billio, 1618). Our thanks go to Professor Paolo Bernardini for bringing the issue to our attention. A few years later, another translation was published in Venice: *Saggi Morali di Francesco Bacchon, Corretti, e dati in luce dal Sig. Cavaliere Andrea Cioli Segretario di Stato del Serenissimo Gran Duca di Toscana et un trattato della Sapienza de gl'Antichi* (In Venetia: Appresso Pietro Dusinelli, 1621). However, Luzzatto is indirectly referring to the enlarged version of essay XIX, published in the final edition of the *Essayes* in 1625. The Latin translation (*Sermones fideles sive interiora rerum*) was published in 1638, the same year as the *Discourse*, and could also possibly be the source. *Francisci Baconis Opera moralia et civilia, Cura Guilielmi Rawley latinitate donata* (Londini: Typis Edwardi Griffini, 1638). The Latin translation is currently available online at <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/essays> (accessed November 2015).

**82** Luzzatto also mentions the Antiperistasis in *Socrates*, 352–53.

E nella lingua ebraica la parola di (*damim*) è comune al sangue, et al danaro. In ogni loco del mondo sono li Hebrei solamente portione di quel sangue, over dinaro che alimenta il corpo politico. Non hanno autorità di comando come superiori, nemmeno impulso di subordinata potestà come organi e ministri, non havendo con il publico alcuna connessione, ma solo come semplice popolo arrecano utile al Principe in ogni tempo, et opportunità, e ritrovandosi in la città numero riguardevole di loro non si può diffinire il giovamento, che straordinariamente al Principe potessero apportare, essendo li popoli a guisa di numerosa quantità d'infermi marmiti, che servono al statuario in molti bisogni, che li può occorrere, conforme all'opportuna richiesta, che però in molta quantità ne tiene appresso di lui apostati.

Oltr'anco il decoro che al Principe risulta per la numerosità de suoi sudditi, conforme il detto del savio, Proverbii capitolo XIV *in multitudine populi dignitas regis, et in paucitate plebis timor emacritudinis*,<sup>24</sup> così conforme l'hebreo si legge, e Rabbi Levi dottissimo così esplica la parola di *razon*, cioè con la molteplicità del popolo ne segue la grandezza, e maestà reggia, e con il mancamento delle gente [28r] vi è il timore della penuria e carestia, cioè il concorso delle genti non adduce mancamento e difetto del vitto, come li volgari credono che la numerosità del popolo causa la strettezza e penuria, anzi augmentandosi il negotio per il concorso delle genti si accrescono li guadagni, et a proportionione li dispendii, e questi poi allettano altrui alla condotta di vitovaglia, et alimenti, et altri sovenimenti de bisogni humani.

Ma perché li errori, e le falacie sono per l'ordinario li satelliti delle trattationi generali, e la verità sempre compagna, e seguace della particolarità e distintione, però parmi convenevole discendere all'individuo, et avvicinarli al calcolo, che probabilmente si può stimare, che d'utile ne riceve il publico ordinariamente et annualmente dalla natione ricovrante nella città, senza includervi quelli che dimorano nel resto del Stato.

Stimo gli Hebrei esser vicino al numero di sei mila in circa, e si può giudicare, che come comun popolo il datio che si cava del loro vitto, come pane, vino, oglio, carne,

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<sup>24</sup> Proverbia 14:28: "In multitudine populi dignitas regis, et in paucitate plebis ignominia principis."

In the Hebrew language, the word *damim* conveys the meaning of both “blood” and “money.”<sup>83</sup> Throughout the world, the Jews make up only a portion of that blood or money that nourishes the political body. They possess no share in the authority as do the superiors, nor do they take part in any subordinated power such as that exercised by the organs and ministers, for they lack any connection with the public administration. They are common people and as such they always bring profits to the prince – at any time and any opportunity. And when there are plenty of them in a city, the more extraordinary the advantages will be for the prince, which can hardly be underestimated. For the people are like a mass of yet-unformed marble that can be used by the sculptor according to a diverse range of needs. This is the reason why the sculptor keeps such a large quantity of marble.

Furthermore, there is the honour of the prince resulting from the numerousness of his subjects, in accordance with the saying of the wise man, in Proverbs, chapter 14: “*In the multitude of people is the king’s glory; but in the want of people is the fear of poverty.*”<sup>84</sup> This can be read in correspondence with the Hebrew text. The highly learned Rabbi Levi explains the word *razon*<sup>85</sup> in the sense that greatness and royal majesty result from having a large number of subjects, but a small population [28r] leads to fears of poverty and shortages. In other words, an abundance of population does not lead to an absence or lack of food. The common people believe that a greater population brings about shortage and poverty. On the contrary, the abundance of people increases the earnings and people are proportionately more inclined to spend their money. And this then leads others to come and sell more food and to supply goods for human needs.

However, since errors and fallacies often result from general examinations, while the truth always accompanies and follows [the focus on] details and differences, it seems to me appropriate here to turn to the individual case and to approach the calculation of the profits one can probably estimate that the government ordinarily receives annually from the [Jewish] Nation living sheltered in the city, leaving aside those dwelling in the other parts of the state.<sup>86</sup>

I estimate that there are around six thousand Jews and one can assess that as common people the duties raised from their goods, such as bread, wine, oil, meat,

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<sup>83</sup> *Damim*, that is “money, property” (Hebrew דמים). The singular (דם) means “blood.” The plural is also attested with the meaning of “blood” in the phrase שפיכות דמים (“bloodshed”), or in the sense of “bloody,” איש דמים. See Psalms 5:7. Luzzatto seems to be suggesting that the Hebrew language, the sacred tongue, confirms the divine approval of commerce. See Jonathan Karp, *The Politics of Jewish Commerce: Economic Thought and Emancipation in Europe, 1638–1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 23.

<sup>84</sup> Hebrew: עם הדרת-מלך; ובאפס לאום, מחיתת רזון.

<sup>85</sup> Probably Levi ben Gershom, see glossary under “Gersonides.” Luzzatto will discuss him in consideration XVI, 79r–v. *Razon* refers to the word רזון in Proverbs 14:28. See also Talmud Bavli, *Bera-khot* 47b.

<sup>86</sup> For a detailed analysis of the following presentation, see Benjamin Ravid, “The Venetian Context of the Discourse,” in the present volume.



vestito, et altre cose simili al loro servitio pertinenti, ascende alla summa di ducati 48 mila, computando ducati 8 all'anno per testa. Né vale il dire esser vano detto computo, poiché se gli Hebrei non habitassero nella città vi capitarebbero altri tanti habitanti christiani di maggior profitto al Prencipe che **[28v]** gli He|brei non sono, e come seguì nell'anno doppo l'ultima peste, ch'in brevissimo tempo si riempì di nuovo la città, e ritornò conforme al pristino stato.

Non vale ridico tal' istanza, ch'essendo all'Hebreo interdetto l'essercitio di tutte l'arti, e prohibitoli il possesso de beni stabili, et impeditoli l'impiego del Foro, vivendo con quell'extraordinarie industrie di sopra accennate, non occupano il loco d'alcuno, e quando loro si partissero non ricapiterebbe nella città alcun altro per trattenersi con tal'istento di vita, e prohibitioni sopradette. Et il pieno conforme l'opinione de fisici desidera d'occupare il vacuo, e reintegrarlo, ma ove vi è stato prima pieno a lui congenere, non aspirando a quel vacuo che giamai non fu d'alcun essere reale occupato, come se fuori dalla convessità del cielo si admettesse spatio privo d'alcun corpo.

Devesi ancora advertire, ch'oltre il numero de detti Hebrei, non potendo essi esercitare alcun'arte mechanica, et operaria come ho detto, nemmeno hanno entrate per il loro vitto, ch'il tutto mercano. Si trattengono per causa loro quantità grande di persone, che si mantengono dell'utile che tragono dal venderli quello li bisogna per il loro alimento, com'anco d'artigiani, che s'impiegano in servitio non solo delle loro persone, ma per supplire anco alla contrattatione di merci smaltite dagli Hebrei in diverse **[29r]** parti del mondo elaborate da essi artisti, e per non haverne del numero certa scienza, voglio suporre esser al numero di quattro mille.

clothing, and other similar items amounts to the sum of 48,000 ducats, calculating on the basis of eight ducats per year, per head.<sup>87</sup> This calculation cannot be refuted by arguing that if the Jews did not live in Venice, the same number of Christian inhabitants would arrive and bring a profit greater than [28v] the Jews procure for the prince, as happened in the year after the last plague, when, after a very short time, the city was filled once again, and returned to its pristine state.

This argument, as I said, is of no consequence, since the Jews are forbidden from the practice of all crafts, just as they are prohibited from the possession of real estate, and not allowed to serve as lawyers. They live by means of those extraordinary industries outlined above. Thus they do not occupy anyone else's space, and if they left, no one else would come to the city, and endure such a hard life under the aforementioned restrictions. According to the opinion of physicists, matter desires to occupy the vacuum and to restore it, but only where matter [that was] similar to it existed. For matter does not aspire to that vacuum that had never been occupied by anything before, as if outside the convexity of Heaven one would admit a space deprived of a body.

Furthermore, it should be noted that besides the number of aforementioned Jews, a great number of [Christian] people maintain themselves by selling them the food they need, for they are not allowed to practice any manual or practical work, as I stated, nor do they have much income to pay for their food, because they invest all their income in trade.<sup>88</sup> [In other words,] due to the presence of the Jews, many people are able to sustain themselves, since they live off the revenue from the food they sell to the Jews. Also artisans are employed by the Jews not only for their personal services, but also to meet the requirements of commerce for the goods that these artisans produce and that the Jews dispatch to various [29r] parts of the world. I do not know the exact number of these artisans, but I would suppose there must be around four thousand of them.

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<sup>87</sup> Loredan reports the updated figures in his speech. See Giuseppe Veltri and Gianfranco Miletto, "Difesa inedita del senator veneziano Loredan in favore degli ebrei 1659–1660," in Veltri, *Filosofo e rabbino*, 249–73, 265: "Se ritrovan adesso in Venetia 4.000 Ebrei in tutto(?), ma per far un computo più chiaro dirò el numero dei Ebrei che sè sopra una descrittione fatta l'anno 1649 el mese di Luglio d'ordine de Signori Provveditori alle Biave, e questi sono 2.629. Per causa// [6r] de questi se cava de datio solamente del loro vitto come pan, vin, oglio, carne, e vestir e altre cose simili pertinenti al semplice loro servitio 42.064 ducati, e questo è facile da dimostrar computando 16 ducati per persona a viver." A few lines further, Loredan adds: "E questo el cavo da un computo che fa un tal Simon Luzzatto ebreo in un libro a stampa da lui nel qual el mostra i utili che porta la nation ebrea, e questo el fa l'anno 1636 nel qual tempo el mette che fosse in Venetia 4.000 ebrei solamente, el dise esser de datio in quel tempo ducati 70.000." However, Loredan mistook the figure Luzzatto gives on page 28r about the number of artisans that the Jews pay for food and other services. Luzzatto says that there are four thousand artisans, and Loredan says that there are four thousand Jews. The figure of 70,000 ducats can be found on page 29r.

<sup>88</sup> See Veltri and Miletto, "Difesa inedita," 265: "I Ebrei non han entrate, non esercitan alcun arte mecanica per poder vivere, cosa che non si pratica da nisun altro stato de persone, onde tutto bisogna che i compran, comprando tutto."

E se benché non v'essendo gli Hebrei, potrebb'esser che ve ne restassero parte di loro, tuttavia mancandoli il guadagno si ridurrebbono a tal strettezza di vita, ch'ancor il publico non riceverebbe da loro l'emolumenti ordinarii. Onde conforme il computo sudetto a ragione de ducati otto per uno, ascenderebbe a ducati trenta doi mille. Li datii che direttamente, et effettivamente sono pagati dagli Hebrei d'entrata, e d'uscita, giudico esser in circa ducati settanta milla all'anno, ché non vi essendo gli Hebrei in gran parte si perderebbero negoziando essi del proprio capitale, over di parenti a loro congiuntissimi dell'istessa natione, ch'anteponerebbono gli Hebrei a qualunque altro in qual loco si trovassero in farli capitar la lor facoltà, e negotii.

Ma di più ancora è d'avvertire il datio ch'obliquamente per causa del traffico degli Hebrei perviene in poter del publico. Estrae l'hebreo un panno di lana fuori della città, e paga il suo datio, ma di più quel smaltimento è cagione dell'introduzione delle lane, oglio ch'a lavorar detto panno si consuma, il guado, indico, grana, cremese che a tingerlo si adopera. Così ancora nell'estrazione del sapone, [29v] non solo si deve advertire al semplice datio dell'uscita, ma dell'entrata dell'oglio, et altri ingredienti, che fanno bisogno alla sua compositione, così li panni di seta, e tutte l'altre mercantie, che si levano dalla città. E così dal datio, che effettivamente pagano dell'entrata, si può giudicare quello dell'uscita, che per l'introduzione de tali mercantie, perviene poi al publico. E giudico che sia in circa doi terzi del primiero, cioè altri ducati 47 mila.

Oltra di questo vi sono ancora le gravezze delle provisioni de banchi, e dependenti da essi, et altre spese ordinarie alla summa di ducati otto mila all'anno in circa. La qual tansa come l'altre straordinarie si fanno per estimo di facoltà, havendo advertenza di non incaricar li poveri, e perciò non vi concorre molto numero di famiglie a tali pagamenti rispetto agli habitanti sudetti, tanto che alcuni di loro si

And if there were no Jews left, some of them [i.e., these artisans] might remain in the city but they would make but would gain so little profit that they would be reduced to very harsh circumstances and consequently the public revenue would not receive its usual income from them. According to the previous estimate of eight ducats per head, the public revenue would amount to a total of 32,000 ducats. I estimate that the import and export duties that the Jews pay directly and in full amount to approximately 70,000 ducats per year. If the Jews were not here, these taxes would be to a greater extent lost, for they trade with their own capital or with that of very close relatives of the same Nation. Therefore, wherever they go, they always prefer to entrust their money and their business to the Jews.

Furthermore, I want to draw attention to the duties resulting from the Jews' trade [that] indirectly end up in the hands of the public revenue. When a Jew exports a fabric from the city he pays his export tax, but beyond this transaction, one must also consider the duties paid for the import of the wool, and the oil that is used when making cloth, as well as the woad,<sup>89</sup> indigo,<sup>90</sup> cochineal,<sup>91</sup> and kermes<sup>92</sup> that are used for dyeing. In the same way, when exporting soap [29v] one must not only calculate ordinary export duties, but also the duties on the oil and the other ingredients that are needed for its composition. The same goes for silk clothing and all other merchandise exported from the city. From the import duties they actually paid one could be able to evaluate the exit tax they pay, which, because of the importation of such merchandise, would consequently fill the public purse. I evaluate that it would amount to approximately two-thirds of the former, that is, to another 47,000 ducats.

One can then add the taxes for the financing of the loan-banks and their related activities, and further ordinary expenses that add up to about 8,000 ducats per year.<sup>93</sup> This tax, like the other extraordinary taxes, is based upon the estimate of their wealth, considering the need to save burdening the poor. Thus, it is not paid by many families in comparison to the previously mentioned inhabitants, so that

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**89** Material for making blue dye.

**90** A dye used to obtain a special shade of blue.

**91** A material used for making red or crimson pigment.

**92** A brilliant red mineral.

**93** Veltri and Miletto, "Difesa inedita," 265–66: "De più ghe sè da osservar el datio, che obliquamente per causa del traffico dei Ebrei vien in man del publico in questa maniera: estrae l'Ebreo un panno de lanna (sic!). De questo el paga el suo datio, per causa de questo ghe sè el smaltimento della lana dell'ogio, del cremese, e altro che per lavorar el detto pano se converrà. De più, se estrae el saon, e non se deve solamente considerar el semplice datio dell'uscita ma quello dell'entrata dell'ogio et altri ingredienti che per farlo s'adopra. E così va discorrendo anche de panni de seta o altro. In questa maniera dal datio// [6v] dell'intrada che effettivamente pagano, se può giudicar quel dell'uscita che per l'introduzion de tali mercantie provien al publico, e se supponè che possa esser due terzi del primo, che vuol dir se el primo fusse ducati 70.000 el saria ducati 45.000; ma ponendolo [?] de ducati 50.000, el sarà solamente da 33 in 34.000 ducati. De più, asonzendo a questi le gravezze della provision de Banchi con altre spese ordinarie che averan alla somma de ducati 8.000."

ha trovato pagar ducati quatrocento all'anno d'agravio ordinario, et aggiuntovi il straordinario, insino alli ducati seicento.

L'obbligo de alloggi de Prencipi, et ambasciatori spesati dal publico è cosa parimente considerabile, ché quando per tal fontione pagava il publico, si trova haver sborsciato sino a ragione de ducati ottocento al mese, e quest'è delle più travagliose, e noiose cariche, che siano imposte agli Hebrei per la difficoltà che si ha nell'essequirla, mutandosi [30r] ogni volta palazzi per tali alloggi. E si potrebbe ancor addurre certe minutie, com'il consumo dal sale, che credo esser il quadruplo di quello adoperano li cristiani per il rito ch'osservano nell'insalare la carne per l'estrazione del sangue a loro proibito, che non occorre farne racconto. La somma della rendita annuale sopradetta è ducati doi cento cinque mille.

N'io ardisco affermare il computo sudetto, esser incensurabile, et incastigabile. Le materie politiche sono piene d'alterationi, e contingentie, et in questo Discorso mi son proposto seguir a guisa di nuovo accademico il probabile, et il verisimile, non come matematico l'assoluto dimostrabile, et irrefragabile.

Vi si aggiunge la tansa straordinaria dell'anno passato 1636 che importò ducati 11000 che sebbene appariva mediocre, essend'imposta all'universale, quando poi s'applicò al particolare riuscì gravissima, al paragone dell'altri habitanti della città. Vi fu ancora l'imposta del quarto delli affitti, che risultò agli Hebrei molto gagliarda, per esser estimate le case conforme alla strettezza delle loro habitationi, confinati nell'angusto recinto del ghetto,

some of them have to pay up to four hundred ducats per year in ordinary taxes, and up to six hundred ducats when adding the extraordinary tax.

The obligation to provide lodgings for [visiting] princes and ambassadors, paid for by the public government, is equally considerable, for when it pays for such a visit, it has to disburse money at a rate of up to eight hundred ducats per month. This is one of the most troubling and annoying burdens imposed upon the Jews, since it is difficult to carry it out because [30r] every time the palaces used for such accommodations change. One could continue adding more details, such as the consumption of salt,<sup>94</sup> which I believe is quadruple that used by Christians. This is a result of the rite that the Jews observe of salting meat to extract blood, which they are not allowed to consume. But one need not take this any further. The sum of the aforementioned annual revenue is 205,000 ducats.<sup>95</sup>

I do not dare to assert that the calculation is above criticism and absolutely trustworthy, or that it does not require revision. Political matters are full of alterations and contingencies, and in this *Discourse*, I intended that I would follow the probable and the plausible, just as a new academician would, and not as a mathematician who follows the absolutely demonstrable and undeniable.

One must add the extraordinary tax of the past year, 1636,<sup>96</sup> which generated 11,000 ducats. Considering that this was a universal tax, this sum seemed moderate, but when applied to a particular situation, [e.g., to that of the Jews,] it became extremely burdensome compared to what other inhabitants of the city had to pay. Another tax was levied on a quarter of the amount of the rents, which had a very strong impact on the Jews, since the houses in the ghetto are assessed according to the closeness of their dwellings confined in the narrow enclosure of the ghetto.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Concerning the precept of putting salt in meat, see Heilbronn, *Dinim we-seder*, based on the renowned *Torat ha-ḥattat* (Cracovia, ca. 1570) written by Moses Isserles (Rema) and published in Venice (1602). Heilbronn wrote his book in Yiddish, since he wanted to address a large public. Rema wrote some glosses to Joseph Caro's *Shulḥan 'arukh* about this issue for the Ashkenazi. See Rema, *Mappah, Shulḥan 'arukh, Yoreh de'ah, Halakhot melikha*, 69–78.

<sup>95</sup> See Veltri and Miletto, “Difesa inedita,” 267: “Ad ogni modo se vede non ostante questo restar netti de rimanzo al publico ducati 120.000. Questo è quel che cavè de utile dai Ebrei, certo, annuo e indubitato. [...]. Questo se cava dai Ebrei de ordinario e certo, quello che d'incerto se possa cavar laserò argomentando dal passà, né ve dirò dell'aggravio dell'alloggio de' Principi o publici ambasciatori che arrivò per la sudetta descrition l'anno 1649 per l'alloggio dell'ambasciator di Polonia e straordinario a ducati 1.000; ne ve starò a dir del gran datio del sal per il gran consumo che ne fan i Ebrei per l'insalar delle carni, e per l'estintion del sangue a loro proibito.”

<sup>96</sup> Since the author mentions the past year 1636 in this consideration, it is possible to conclude that the entire work was not composed in this year.

<sup>97</sup> See also the literal translation proposed by Ravid (*Economics*, 81–82 n. 77): “Since the houses are assessed according to the narrowness of their apartments, confined in the crowdedness precincts of the ghetto.” See also Veltri and Miletto, “Difesa inedita,” 267: “Né starò a dir della tansa imposta l'anno 1636 ch'arrivò alla summa 11.000, né quella del quarto d'affitti ch'importò ducati 6.000 con altri utili rilevantissimi.” For further details about this tax see also Ravid, “Introduction to the Charters,” 225, especially n. 53 and annexed sources; Giacomo Carletto, *Il ghetto veneziano nel '700 attraverso i catastici* (Rome: Carucci Editore, 1981).

che senz'alcuna esageratione si può giudicare tal estimo esser stato il triplo, che se dette case fossero situate fuori del ghetto stantiate da christiani, e questo importò **[30v]** ducati sei milla, ch'aggiungendo questi doi agravii alla somma predetta sono doicento e vinti doi milla, quantità di danaro considerabile, che vi sono delle provincie, che passano sotto titolo di ducheia, che non arrivano a tal termine di rendita.

Di più anco in tempo d'armata di mare concorrono gli Hebrei con gli altri artigiani in supplire alli publici bisogni, onde in tal' occasione nel tempo passato hanno pagato ducati mille, e cinquecento. Ma di più è notabile, che la quantità d'artigiani, e professori che si trattengono nella città per causa degli Hebrei, come più volte ho detto, al tempo di armata concorrono con le loro persone, ovvero con il danaro in stipendiare huomini, che serviscono in armata conforme l'instituti del Prencipe, che anco questo è profitto risultante dagli Hebrei.

Oltre di ciò si può considerare il dinaro di detti Hebrei di somma considerabile, che si gira nel banco publico esposto al servitio di molti, e del negotio in particolare. Ma di più anco quando fu imposto il depositare danari in Cecca con li soliti utili, furono tansati gli Hebrei conforme agli altri. Ma circa ciò merita alcuna rificazione, ch'essendo rimessi in mano d'Hebrei molti haveri, e facultà d'amici, e parenti della natione, soggetti a prencipi alieni, come già ho detto, in occasione di far depositi in **[31r]** Cec|ca si potrebbe praticar con essi alcun partito di rilevante somma con gli utili ordinarii delli danari altrui capitatoli nelle mani. Il che sarebbe di maggior proffitto, ch'il trattare simili affari con altri stranieri, che attrahendo gli utili annuali alle loro patrie ne privano la città, ma con gli Hebrei forse ne succederebbe diverso avvenimento, ché non havendo propria patria si ridurrebbero facilmente ove è posto il loro capitale, e ne cavano utile.

Ma quello, che sopra ogni altra cosa è meritevole d'advertenza, et osservatione, che per conservare detta entrata non occorrere, ch'il Prencipe vi si occupi con li soliti provvedimenti, né che v'impieghi spesa, e dispendio alcuno. Il recinto del ghetto non ha bisogno de presidio, che lo custodisca, né cittadella, che lo diffenda, ovvero raffreni, non armata di mare, che lo costeggi, per evitare li repentini insulti de corsari. Non vi è gelosia de prencipi, che lo soprenda, non timore d'interna seditione, che l'agiti, non pericolo d'inondiatione di mare, ovvero d'impetuoso fiume, che lo sommerga, non necessità di continova ristoratione, et acconcio di muraglie, né provvedimento di apparato di bellici instrumenti, non vi occorre haver cura **[31v]** per il mancamento di vitto, né vi fa bisogno di regimento per governarlo, né questore, ovvero camerlingo ch'esiga l'entrate.

With no overestimation, one can judge that this assessment would have amounted to three times what it would have been had those houses been situated outside the ghetto and inhabited by Christians. The actual tax amounted to [30v] 6,000 ducats. When one adds these two taxes to the previous sum, the final result is 220,000 ducats, [which represents] a considerable amount of money, since there are provinces, usually considered as duchies, that do not generate such high revenue.

Furthermore, at times when the maritime fleet went to battle, the Jews would participate with other artisans and supply the public needs of the treasury. On such occasions in the past, they paid 1,500 ducats. Yet it is even more remarkable that the number of artisans and professionals who stayed in the city because of the Jews contributed to the naval campaign with their persons or with their money by paying men who served in the fleet, in accordance with the princely decree. This is also a profit that results from the Jews' presence.

Moreover, one must take into account the considerable sum of money these Jews generate for the public banks. [This money] in the public bank was made available for the service of many, and for commerce in particular. Besides, when it was ordered to deposit money in the Mint at the usual interest rate, the Jews were taxed like all others. This, however, deserves further reflection, since, as I have already said, the Jews had been entrusted with many possessions and riches belonging to their friends and relatives, who were subjects of foreign princes. Therefore, when depositing money in the Mint, [31r] one could make provisions to allow for gaining a considerable sum [of money, taking] ordinary interest from the money other people had entrusted to the Jews. This would generate greater profits than conducting similar transactions with other foreigners, who, by exporting the annual interests to their own countries, would deprive the city of them. With the Jews, a different scenario would possibly unfold, since they have no country of their own, they readily stay where their money is and derive profit from it.

Still, above all, it is worth noting that in order to preserve the previously mentioned income, the prince does not need to be preoccupied with the usual proceedings, nor does he lose any money from it. The enclosure of the ghetto does not need a garrison to guard it, nor a citadel to defend or retain it. It does not need a naval force to patrol the coast to prevent sudden attacks by corsairs. There is no jealousy on the part of princes who want to attack it, nor fear of internal revolt that would cause agitation; there is no danger of flooding by the sea, nor of an impetuous river that might submerge it. Continuous restoration and fixing walls are not necessary; nor does it need an arsenal. No solutions have to be found to manage [31v] the scarcity of food, nor is there a need for a regiment or for a questor or chamberlain to demand entrance taxes.



La natione hebrea è per se stessa sommessa, sogetta, e pieghevole, all'ubbidienza del suo Prencipe, posta nel centro si può dire della città, diligente et industrie da per sé in osservare, e corrispondere con gran rigori li diritti, e pagamenti, ch'al publico deve, e vorebbe essere così habile al maneggio dell'armi con il spargimento del proprio sangue, come pronta alla profusione del danaro in servizio della Serenissima Republica, che non meno in quell'attione, ch'in questa si mostrerebbe disposta.

E qui m'occorre memorare cosa, benché di poco momento, e quasi indegna di farvi sopra riflesso. Ma poiché da ciò si può congetturare il buon talento, che tiene la natione verso il publico servitio, non ho voluto trascurare il narrarla. Fu l'anno calamitoso per tutto lo Stato, per il grave flagello della peste, onde li sudditi hebbero occasione di esperimentare la publica clemenza, et il Prencipe di fare dimostranza della sua singulare munificenza, e pietà, che con vigilanza indiffessa, e larghissimo spargimento di danaro sovenne, e suffragò all'urgenti bisogni del suo popolo.

Gli Hebrei non solamente fecero generosa risoluzione di non importunare il loro Prencipe già tutto occupato in pietosi uffitii [32r] verso li sudditi christiani, ché senza dubbio ancor loro haverebbono sentito gli effetti della publica benignità, tuttavia procurorono da se stessi perservarsi con dispendiosi provvedimenti, forsi la men lesa, e contaminata parte della città. Ma di più ancora offerirono alcune centinaia de ducati all'illustrissimo Magistrato della Sanità per sovenimento de poveri christiani. E dall'eccellentissimo Senato li fu ancora imposto, che dovessero fare un sborso di ducati dieci mila, per aiuto de poveri per ristorarsi poi nelli datii per l'avvenire da loro stessi pagabili, benché in quell'istesso tempo continuarono di fare li soliti pagamenti a banchieri conforme a loro accordi, e conventioni. Et ebbero essi Hebrei tal decreto a sommo favore, stimando d'haver incontrato occasione di propagare il loro buon affetto in tempi così travagliosi dimostrando la loro ossequenza, et ottima dispositione in essequire li publici comandi.

The Jewish Nation is by itself submissive, humble, and pliable to the will of its prince. Placed, one may say, in the centre of the city, it is independent, diligent, and industrious in observing and responding with great scrupulousness when it comes to the rights and payments that it owes to the state. [In addition,] it wishes that it could be as skilful at handling weapons and the spilling of its own blood copiously as it is ready to spend money in the service of the Most Serene Republic, for no less in the latter than in the former action it would display its complete willingness.

At this point, I would like to recall one point, even if it is of little consequence and almost unworthy of reflection. However, one can deduce from it the remarkable talent that the Jewish Nation maintains for public service, and so I would not want to withhold it. During the disastrous year for the entire State due to the terrible scourge of the plague,<sup>98</sup> and when the subjects had the opportunity to test public clemency, the prince succeeded in demonstrating his unique munificence and piety. With tireless vigilance and the greatest expense of money, he attended to and relieved the urgent needs of his people.

The Jews did not only generously resolve not to disturb their prince, since he was already busy [32r] with compassionate deeds towards his Christian subjects. For it was beyond any doubt that the Jews would certainly have felt the effects of the public charity towards them too. Nonetheless, they passed these difficult times self-sufficiently with the disbursement of provisions to preserve the ghetto, perhaps the least harmed and contaminated part of the city. Moreover, they offered several hundred ducats to the Most Illustrious Magistrate of Sanitation for the support of poor Christians. And it was ordered by the Most Excellent Senate that the Jews should disburse 10,000 ducats to help the poor,<sup>99</sup> which would then be repaid to them from future duties they would have to pay. Nonetheless, at the same time they continued to make the usual payments to the bankers in conformity with their agreements and obligations. The Jews accepted this decree with the greatest favour, believing they had risen to the occasion to demonstrate their good intentions and excellent disposition during such terrible times in carrying out the orders of the government.

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<sup>98</sup> This is a reference to the plague that occurred in 1630: see Carla Boccato, “Testimonianze ebraiche sulla peste del 1630 a Venezia,” *La rassegna mensile di Israel* 41 (1975): 458–67.

<sup>99</sup> See Veltri and Miletto, “Difesa inedita,” 271: “Passà: mentre l’anno calamitoso della peste, non solo no i han voludo importunar el publico impiegado in pietosi offitti per i Cristiani, da loro medesimi conservandose senza mal, ma han offerto al Magistrato Illustrissimo della Sanità per sovegno de Cristiani centenera de ducati et esborsorono per ordine publico per questo effetto ducati 10.000.”

## CONSIDERATIONE IX

### *Della erettione di tre banchi per la povertà, fatta dagli Hebrei*

Di niuna parte, e membro delle loro città tengono li Principi più accurato riguardo, et esata providenza, che del popolo povero, e [32v] melchino, questo è quello, che continuamente reclama, né giamai si contenta del suo stato. Le ricchezze sono timide, e paurose, la povertà, espedita, risoluta, e temeraria, onde Lucano nel terzo in tal proposito disse:

*Namque adserit urbes  
Sola fames, emiturque metus, cum segne potentes  
Vulgus alunt, nescit plebes ieiuna timere.*

Cioè li principi mercano con l'abbondanza, la riverenza, e l'ubbidienza de popoli, l'affamata plebe è affatto indocile all'ossequio, e non sa ciò che sia timore de dominanti. Onde Augusto egregio domator del popolo trionfator di tutti li popoli, come riferisce Tacito, *ubi militem donis, populum annona, cunctos dulcedine otii pellexit*. E Salomone ne Proverbii, espone la conditione, e natura delle ricchezze, e povertà, quando disse, capitolo 10 *opulentia divitis urbs fortitudinis eius, terror pauperum egestas eorum*,<sup>25</sup> così consona con il testo hebreo, attribuisce alle ricchezze solamente la difesa, et il riparo di coloro che le possiedono, come nel capitolo 18 ancor v'aggiunse esser a guisa di munitissima muraglia.<sup>26</sup> Ma alla povertà concede anco di più il terrore dell'offender, et invader altrui, non havendo timore di pericolare, e perder alcuna cosa, ché perciò ha bisogno di maggior satisfattione, over più rigoroso freno.

Ma la Serenissima Republica, non sol'indotta al favorire, [33r] e sufragare la sua povertà da interessi humani, e di Stato, ma mossa da interni stimuli della propria carità, fra gli altri

<sup>25</sup> Proverbia 10:15: "Substantia divitis, urbs fortitudinis eius; pavor pauperum egestas eorum."

<sup>26</sup> Proverbia 18:11: "Substantia divitis urbs roboris eius et quasi murus validus circumdans eum."

## CONSIDERATION IX

### *On the Three Loan-Banks for the Poor Established by the Jews*

There is no part of the population to which the princes administer more attentive care and exact foresight than to the poor and [32v] wretched people who continually complain and who are never satisfied with their condition. Wealth is timid and fearful; poverty, on the other hand, is determined, resolute, and reckless, just as Lucan states in the third book on this subject:

*Hunger alone makes cities free;  
and when men in power feed the idle mob,  
they buy subservience; a starving people is incapable of fear.*<sup>100</sup>

That is, princes are used to paying generously for the reverence and obedience of the people. A hungry population is unyielding to humility and does not know what the fear of rulers is. Therefore Augustus, the excellent ruler of people and conqueror of all peoples, stated, as Tacitus has written: “*He first conciliated the army by gratuities, the populace by cheapened corn, the world by the amenities of peace.*”<sup>101</sup> And in the Proverbs, Solomon illustrates the conditions and nature of wealth and poverty when he states in chapter 10: “*The rich man’s wealth is his strong city; the fear of the poor is their poverty.*”<sup>102</sup> This is the translation in harmony with the Hebrew text. [Solomon] attributes to wealth only the defence and protection of those who possess it, just as in chapter 18, where he adds that wealth is like a well-fortified wall,<sup>103</sup> whereas to poverty he furthermore concedes the threat of attack and invasion by others, for [poor people do not need] to fear danger or the loss of anything. This is the reason why they need to be satisfied with more care and effort or to be strictly repressed.

Nonetheless, the Most Serene Republic has been induced to favour the poor [33r] and to alleviate their conditions not merely for humane interests or political reasons. Its inherent charity has had a stimulating impact on it. [Thus,] among other

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<sup>100</sup> Lucan, *The Civil War* III:56–58.

<sup>101</sup> Tacitus, *Annals* I:2. Tacitus, *Cornelius Tacitus exacta cura recognitus, et emendatus Copiosus index rerum, locorum, et personarum, de quibus in his libris agitur. Varia lectio, in calce operis impressa* (Venezia: Eredi di Aldo Manuzio, 1534), X: “Ubi militem donis, populum annona, cunctos dulcedine otii pellexit.”

<sup>102</sup> Hebrew: *הון עשיר, קרית עוון; מחיתת דלים רישם*.

<sup>103</sup> Proverbs 18:11.

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**Note:** For this consideration, see Benjamin Ravid, “Moneylending in 17th-Century Jewish Vernacular Apologetica,” in *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 257–83; Brian Pullan, “Jewish Banks and Monti di Pietà,” 53–72.

ottimi provvedimenti di benignità, et esemplare pietà usata verso li bisognosi, fu ancora instituito, et imposto agli Hebrei, che con l'apertura de tre banchi dovessero soccorrere a bisogni, et urgenze de poveri meschini, con utile solamente de cinque per cento all'anno, cosa così insensibile che le spese d'affitti de lochi, fattori, agenti, et altre occorrenze supera di vantaggio a sì picciol interesse. La somma di detto imprestito è senza limitatione, benché non siano in obbligo li banchieri di servire più de ducati tre per un sol pegno. Questo comodo è spetiale alla città di Venetia, ché in altri lochi d'Italia si presta dagli Hebrei insin a ragione de deciotto per cento, e credo che li ragionevoli impulsi, ch'hanno mosso l'eccellentissimo Senato ad imporre tal carica agli Hebrei in particolare, furono questi.

Primo, che scorrendo il prudentissimo Senato certa dissensione e repugnantia, ch'apporta seco la disparità, e differenza di religione, et il disavvantaggio, che ne poteva ricevere l'Hebrei come parte più debole, dal popolo più minuto, ha deliberato, che per mezzo del soministrarli danaro ne suoi bisogni si generasse cert'amistà ovvero almeno tolleranza verso gli Hebrei, e come l'esperienza [33v] mostra, il popolo comune essere più piacevole, e trattabile con la natione hebrea, ch'in altro loco del mondo.

Secondo, ch'essendo l'Hebreo per se stesso il più fiacco, e meno rispettato suddito, ch'abbia il Principe, mentre che mancasse del suo dovere con la povertà, può essa per ogni minimo delitto, et inosservanza, senz'alcun riguardo reclamare a magistrati per il suo rifacimento, et operare sicché l'Hebreo ne riceva il meritato castigo.

Terzo, essendo il nome di usura tanto abborrito, e detestato dalle pubbliche leggi di Venetia, però non ha consentito che n'anco il poco interesse di cinque per cento sia da christiani eseguito.

Quarto, benché il felicissimo regimento della Republica è talmente stabilito, che non deve dubitare d'alcuna alteratione, nondimeno per modo di buon governo, e per dare certo documento, et esemplarità ad altrui, non ha voluto permettere giamai, che la fontione di soccorrere con danari alla povertà sia praticata se non da natione affatto rimessa e soggetta, remota assolutamente da qualunque pensiero seditioso, et ambizioso.

E quest'istessa advertenza arrecò la Sacra Scrittura nel caso della carestia occorso nella terra di Egitto a tempo di Iacob patriarcha, come nel Genesi, capitolo 41 si legge, ch'havendo Faraone re [34r] dell'Egitto, vaticinato per mezzo d'insogni, che dovesse avvenire nel suo paese estrema penuria de vetovaglie, prepose Iosef, ch'all'hora si trovava schiavo incarcerato, e forastiero, alla destributione

excellent provisions of kindness and exemplary piety employed towards the needy, the Republic has ordered and instructed the Jews to open three loan-banks. [These loan-banks] respond to the needs and solicitations of the poor with an interest rate of only five per cent per year<sup>104</sup> – an amount so low that the expenses of leases on the buildings, managers, agents, and other requirements exceed the total of such low interest rates. The sum of the loan has no limitation, even though the money-lenders are not obliged to lend more than three ducats for a single pledge. This arrangement is unique to the city of Venice, since in other places in Italy Jews are in the habit of lending at a rate of eighteen per cent. [Furthermore,] I believe that the reasonable impulses that moved the most excellent Senate to impose such a burden on the Jews in particular were as follows.

First, the Most Prudent Senate has perceived some dissensions and a certain repugnance that comes with religious disparity and difference, related to the disadvantage that the Jews might suffer from the resentment of the common people, since they form its weakest part. [Then it] decreed that by lending money to the poor at such a low interest rate whenever they needed it, a certain degree of friendship, or at least tolerance, would arise towards the Jews. As experience [33v] has shown, the common people were indeed more pleased with and amenable towards the Jewish Nation than in other parts of the world.

Second, since the Jew is already the weakest and least respected subject of the prince, in the event that the Jew fails in his duty towards the poor, they might demand compensation from the magistrates for the smallest crime or misdeed without hesitation and ensure that he receives punishment for his crime.

Third, since the name “usury” is so abhorred and detested by the public laws of Venice, the city does not allow even the lowest interest rate of five per cent to be requested by Christians.

Fourth, this happy regime of the Republic is so well-established that there is no reason to suppose that it will [go through] any change. Nonetheless, in order to be a good government and to display [its own] exemplary, glorious model, [the Republic] would never tolerate this function of helping the poor with money being practised only by a Nation that is so demure, devoted, and absolutely removed from any seditious or ambitious thoughts.

In the Holy Scripture, this same consideration ensued in the case of the famine that occurred in the land of Egypt in the time of Jacob the Patriarch. In Genesis, chapter 41, one reads that when the Pharaoh,<sup>105</sup> king [34r] of Egypt, foresaw in his dreams that an extreme famine was to occur in his country, he placed Joseph, who at the time was an imprisoned slave and a foreigner, at the head of the distribution

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**104** Veltri and Miletto, “Difesa inedita,” 272: “Mentre i soccorre ai bisogni della povertà con el solo guadagno de cinque per cento, e questo per leze che continuamente attaccada ai banchi se vede.”

**105** In the Bible, it is used as a personal name: see Exodus 7:13.

de viveri per sufragare il popolo in sì grave calamità. Che oltre il pretesto della sufficienza, e prudenza di Iosef vi concorse ancora a mio giuditio un arcano di Stato di non lasciare maneggiare il popolo in necessità, et indigenza tale, da huomo già conosciuto, e praticato da loro, per sospetto che allettandoli in tale ingruenza non se ne facesse padrone, e signore, ma sì bene da un giovanetto per avanti servo, imprigionato, alieno, e differente di religione, privo d'ogni aderenza, assicurandosi per tal via d'ogni sospetto, e gelosia di stato.

of food in order to help the people during such a grave calamity.<sup>106</sup> In my opinion, the Pharaoh had a hidden political agenda (*arcana imperi*)<sup>107</sup> besides Joseph's competence and prudence. He would not allow a man already familiar and known to the people to help them in a time of such need and poverty, as there was reason to suspect that he might lure them into declaring him master and Lord. But [since the position was filled] by a young man, a former slave, imprisoned, foreign, and with a different religion, deprived of any contacts, [the Pharaoh] safely averted all suspicion and political jealousy with this provision.

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**106** See Genesis 41:1–44.

**107** See Horst Dreitzel, "Die 'Staatsrason' und die Krise des politischen Aristotelismus: Zur Entwicklung der politischen Philosophie in Deutschland im 17. Jahrhundert," in *Aristotelismo politico e ragion di stato*, ed. Artemio Enzo Baldini (Florence: Olschki, 1995), 129–56.



## CONSIDERATIONE X

### *Che la protezione usata verso gli Hebrei, è attione onorevole*

È concetto de savii, che la sapienza, e grandezza d'Iddio non meno si fa conoscere nella minuta formatione di picciol insetto, che nella articulatione, et organizatione di grand'elefante, e li maghi in Egitto poterno formare le rane, ma non giammai produrre li pediculi. Così la virtù di sovrano Principe nel somministrare la giustizia, tanto [34v] riluce nell'umil plebe, che nell'insigne, e conspicua nobiltà. E l'istesso Iddio più volte si compiacque nella Scrittura Sacra, nominarsi padre de pupilli, e giudice di vedove, che intitolarsi oppressore de superbi monarchi, e domatore di tiranni. E Malachi profetta, conforme l'hebraico disse *et splendeat vobis timentibus nomen meum sol clementiae, et curatio in radiis eius*.<sup>27</sup> È la clementia simile al Sole, che li suoi raggi riscaldano più la regione dell'aria inferiore, e contigua alla Terra, che la superiore a lui vicina, così la clementia d'Iddio più s'esercita in giovar alli depressi e bassi, che alli sollevati, e sublimi.

Onde Esaia, capitolo 66<sup>28</sup> disse, in nome de Iddio, *ad quem autem aspiciam nisi ad pauperulum, et contrito spiritu?* Et il Salmista ragionando con Iddio li dice, *ego autem in clementia aspiciam vultum tuum*,<sup>29</sup> cioè l'omnipotenza, la sapienza, et eternità d'Iddio mirano all'infinito, et immenso di cui sono attributi. Ma la clementia e misericordia hanno relationi, e riguardano alla nostra debolezza e fragilità, e però essendo ritratti corrispondenti alla nostra capacità ci sonno espressivi in parte della divinità. Così a Moise

27 Malachias 4:2: "Et orietur vobis timentibus nomen meum sol iustitiae, et sanitas in pennis eius."

28 Isaias 66:2: "Ad quem autem respiciam, nisi ad pauperulum, et contritum spiritu."

29 Psalmi 16:15: "Ego autem in iustitia apparebo conspectui tuo."

## CONSIDERATION X

### *Why the Protection Practised towards the Jews is an Honourable Action*

According to a concept introduced by the sages, both the wisdom and the greatness of God make themselves known as much through the minutiae of a small insect as through the articulation and organisation of a large elephant.<sup>108</sup> The sorcerers of Egypt could form frogs, but they were never able to create gnats. Similarly, the virtue of the sovereign prince in administering justice [34v] shines out whenever it is used, for the common people as well as for the eminent and remarkable nobility. According to the Holy Scripture, God himself takes more pride in being acknowledged as the father of orphans and the judge of widows than in being called the oppressor of haughty monarchs and the dominator of tyrants. The prophet Malachi, according to the Hebrew text, stated: “*But unto you that fear My name shall the sun of righteousness shine with healing in its wings.*”<sup>109</sup> Clemency is similar to the sun: its rays heat lower region of the air, closer to the earth, more than the upper air [that is] nearer to it. So too the clemency of God is exercised in helping the lowly and the depressed as much as those who are dignified and sublime.

Thus Isaiah, in chapter 66, stated in the name of God: “*Whom will I look at if not at the man that is poor and of a contrite spirit?*”<sup>110</sup> And the writer of the Psalms, addressing God, says to him, “*As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness.*”<sup>111</sup> This means that the omnipotence, wisdom, and authority of God tend to the infinity and immensity of which they are attributes, but clemency and mercy pertain and are related to human weakness and fragility. Since they are portrayed in such a way that they correspond to our capacities, they also partly express divinity. Thus, when Moses

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**108** This seems to be a frequently used *topos* in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature. The classical source associating insects and elephants with reference to the greatness of nature is Pliny the Elder (*Natural History* IX:1,4): “But we marvel at elephants’ shoulders carrying castles..., whereas really nature is to be found in her entirety nowhere more than in her smallest creations.” A similar *topos* also appears in the Bible, Proverbs 30:24–28: “24. There are four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: 25. The ants are a people not strong, yet they provide their food in the summer; 26. The rock-badgers are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the crags; 27. The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands; 28. The spider thou canst take with the hands, yet is she in kings’ palaces.” Augustine, *City of God* IX:22: “Deus autem ita est artifex magnus in magnis, ut minor non sit in parvis.” Gerard J. M. Bartelink, “Augustinus über die minuta animalia: Eminent in minimis maximus ipse Deus,” in *Aevum inter utrumque. Mélanges offerts à Gabriel Sanders*, ed. Marc van Uytanghe and Roland Demeulenaere (Steenbrugge: Abbatia S. Petri, The Hague: Nijoff, 1991), 11–19. See also Lissa, “La zooantropologia scettica.”

**109** Hebrew: ויזאתם מפשעם, כעגלי מרבק, שמש צדקה, ומרפא, בכנפיה; ויזאתם מפשעם, כעגלי מרבק.

**110** Hebrew: ואל-זה אביט--אל-עני ונכה-רוח.

**111** Psalms 17:15. Hebrew: אשבעה בהקייך, אחזה פניך; אשבעה בהקייך, אחזה פניך.

che ricercò da Iddio *ostende mihi gloriam tuam*,<sup>30</sup> altro non li fu mostrato che la sua clementia, e misericordia, come nell'Exodo capitolo 33. Ma perché li Principi ancor loro sono rappresentanti della Divinità conviene che nelle attioni della clemenza concorrono dovendo li [35r] ritratti dell'istesso originario in fra loro non esser dispari.

Ricordomi in questo proposito d'haver inteso da sperimentato e saggio politico ministro di gran Principe, che affermava, che capitando lui in città, ove dimorano Hebrei, non sapeva ritrovare conietura più evidente per indagare li veraci, et interni sentimenti del Principe, et essenziali, e reali conditioni del governo, che in esaminare, e cautamente osservare le maniere con quali si trattava con gli Hebrei sudditi, ché se il Principe al suo proprio, e natio popolo mostra piacevolezza, et essercita incorrotta giustitia, può forse ciò derivare piuttosto da fiachezza d'animo, e timore, se con forastieri è humano, chissà ciò non avvenire per servile rispetto che tiene al Principe a cui sono vassalli.

Ma della giustitia, clemenza, protettione, e difesa ch'usa verso gli Hebrei non può esserne causa se non una virtù eroica d'animo ingenuo, naturalmente disposto in sollevare gli oppressi, e sovvenire gli deboli, essendo gli Hebrei non solo d'animo rimesso, et humile, e sempre avvezzi nelle gravezze, et oppressioni, ché però sono acostumati di non esalare pur un languido lamento, com'ancor parimente, privi affatto in qualunque regione del mondo di alcun particolare Principe che li sia protettore, e difensore. E di più mi soggiunse detto ministro, che fra molte evidentie della giustitia venetiana, e dell'ottimo suo [35v] Gover|no non essere l'ultima, l'osservatione da lui fatta circa l'indifferente equità, e non esorbitante impositione, che verso gli Hebrei era usata di fare.

Dal che si può ancora concludere non esser meno onorevole al Principe venetiano la protettione che tiene della natione, di quello gli è di profitto l'entrate di sopra accenate, tanto più, che queste l'accrescano solamente tesoro, cosa comune con li privati, ma quella gli apporta gloria, ch'è proprietà individuale di Principi, e gran monarchi.

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30 Exodus 33:18: "Qui ait: Ostende mihi gloriam tuam."

asked God, “*Show me Thy glory*”<sup>112</sup> in Exodus 33, he was shown nothing but His clemency and mercy. But given that princes are still representatives of the divinity, it is appropriate [for them] to take part in acts of clemency, since the [35r] portrait should not be different from the original.

With regard to this subject, I recall having heard a wise and experienced politician, the minister of a great prince, affirm that when he dwelled in a city where Jews had settled, he knew of no plainer deduction for investigating the true and inner feelings of the prince and the essential and real conditions of the government than by examining and cautiously observing the manners with which Jewish subjects were treated. If the prince demonstrated benevolence to his native people and exercised true justice, one could perhaps understand this to be the result of fear and a weakness in spirit. If he was humane and kind towards foreigners, he may have been doing so because he was displaying a servile respect to the prince of these foreigners.

Quite contrary to this, any justice, clemency, protection, and defence that he employs towards the Jews can only arise from the heroic virtue of a genuine spirit naturally disposed to helping the oppressed and meeting the needs of the weak. For not only do the Jews have a submissive and humble spirit; they are also accustomed to difficulties and oppressions. They will not even breathe a feeble lament as they continue to be simultaneously completely deprived of a prince who was willing to protect and shelter them in any region of the world. The above-mentioned minister also told me that among the many demonstrations of Venetian justice and in the excellence of its [35v] government, he took no little notice of the equanimity, free from any passion, that was employed towards the Jews, and remarked on the lack of impositions usually placed upon them.

From these remarks, it can be concluded that it is no less honourable for the Venetian prince to exercise protection towards the Jewish Nation than it is profitable, because of the aforementioned gains resulting from the entrance fees. These profits not only help to increase the treasury he must share with private citizens, but [his engagement in protecting the Jews is especially honourable] for bringing glory, which is the personal attribute of princes and great monarchs.

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<sup>112</sup> Hebrew: הִרְאֵנִי נָא, אֶת-כְּבוֹדְךָ.

## CONSIDERATIONE XI

***Quanto sia difficile diffinir gli costumi degli Hebrei in universale, e che le delinquenze loro facilmente si possono impedire***

Socrate quel gran maestro della vita civile, che richiamò, come dicono, la filosofia vagante circa li cieli, al consortio degli huomini, introducendola nelle città, dopo una curiosa indagatione di se stesso penetrando in tutti li più reconditi recessi, et abstrusi repostigli del suo animo, pronuntio non sapere se egli fosse un solo animale, ovvero una molteplicità di diversi in se stessi anodati, et involupati, talmente trovava in se medesimo confuse le virtù, e li vitii, li eccessi, e le moderationi, che conforme la dottrina di Stoici li predetti [36r] animali appellavano.

E se Anasagora, che negava la generatione delle cose naturali, ché perciò introdusse una certa massa confusa, e composta di tutte le cose, che giudicò in qualunque cosa vi fosse annessa e congiunta qualsivoglia altra, opinione stimata absurda, havesse una certa simil tal cosa proposta dell'animo degli huomini, forse con più aplauso de dotti sarebbe stata ricevuta, perché se con attentione si considerasse li moti dell'animo, v'apparirebbe d'infinite cose un universale mesculio.

Il coraggio d'avventurare la vita sovente scaturisce dal timore che s'ha de volgarî sussuri e mormorii, come per il contrario Fabio pusillanimo nell'assalire Annibale, ma intrepido disprezzator della saliva della plebe. L'avidità di prolungar la vita, e godere de suoi piaceri, antepoendo le volutà deboli ma durabili alli vehementi e brevi, ci fa divenire temperati, e moderati. Onde Socrate appresso Platone nel *Fedone* scoprì questo gran arcano della moralità dicendo che li moderati, *intemperantia*

## CONSIDERATION XI

### ***Referring to the Difficulties in Describing the Customs of the Jews in General, and That Their Misdemeanours Could Easily Be Prevented***

They say that the great master of civil life, Socrates, brought philosophy, which was wandering high up in the heavens, back into human society and that he opened the cities' gates to it.<sup>113</sup> After having thoroughly investigated himself and penetrating the most hidden recesses and obscure corners of his soul, he announced that he did not know whether there was but one animal dwelling in his soul or a multiplicity of different animals, wrapped around each other and entangled with themselves. Indeed, he found in himself the virtues, vices, excesses, and moderation – traits that the Stoic doctrine called **[36r]** animals – entwined with one another.<sup>114</sup>

It was Anaxagoras who denied the generation of natural things, and he assumed that the world was made out of a jumbled mass that was composed of all things. Thus, he believed that everything was connected and joined to everything. This opinion was deemed absurd. Had he ever suggested something similar of the human soul, his opinion might have been met with greater applause by the sages. For if one were to carefully consider the impulses of the soul, one would witness the appearance of a universal mixture of infinite things.

The courage to risk one's life often arises from the fear produced by vulgar whispers and murmurs. Fabius could be mentioned as an example of the opposite tendency, for he was half-hearted when attacking Hannibal<sup>115</sup> but brave in scorning the plebs who spat at him. Hence, the covetous desire to prolong life and to enjoy its pleasures by placing weak but durable satisfactions before vehement and brief ones makes us temperate and moderate. Thus Socrates, in Plato's *Phaedo*, unravels the great secret of morality by arguing of the moderates that "*it is a kind of licen-*

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**113** Cicero, *Academics* II:15,5: "It is my view and it is universally agreed, that Socrates was the first person who summoned philosophy away from mysteries veiled in concealment by nature herself, upon which all philosophers before him had been engaged, and led it to the subject of ordinary life, in order to investigate the virtues and the vices, good and evil generally, and to realize that heavenly matters are either remote from our knowledge or else, however fully known, have nothing to do with the good life." See also *Tusculan Disputations* V:4,10.

**114** Luzzatto is quoting Seneca (*Epistles* XIX:113,3). For a discussion of the passage and of the consideration, see Giuseppe Veltri, "Individual Responsibility and Collective Punishment in the Thought of Rabbi Simone Luzzatto," in this volume, 295.

**115** See glossary.

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**Note:** The original Italian *costumi* blends together different meanings: customs in the sense of *minhagim* (see Lattes's translation of the title of this consideration with *minhagim*; Lattes, *Ma'amar*, 104) but also in the sense of "behaviour, habit, disposition."

*quadam temperantes sint*, e così *timiditate fortes sint*, e Salamon nell'Eclesiaste capitolo 4 disse, *et contemplatus sum omnem laborem, et omnem rectitudinem operum, et ecce ipsa esse invidia hominis de socio suo*<sup>31</sup> conforme l'hebraico; cioè le virtù volgari sono invidia, garegiamento, et emulatione che tengono gli huomini con loro prossimi confondendosi in tal maniera le virtù con vitii.

[36v] Il piacer principal oggetto, e tanto attrattivo del nostro animo è sempre mescolato con il dolore suo contrario come dimostra Platone nel *Filebo*, la sete e la fame sono li maggiori condimenti del nostro gusto, le tragiche representationi ci turbano, e producono in noi indignatione contra li tiranni, tuttavia ne sentiamo un certo occulto prurito, et irritamento di piacere, che molto ci alletta e rapisce. E gli Hebrei proferiscono il piacer con la ditione di תענוג che derriva anco dal verbo ענה che significa patimento afflittivo dinotando la mistione sopradetta.

L'impetuose agitationi dell'ira furono da Homero comendate piene di giocondità, e dolcezza, così nel fervor dell'amore vi nasce la gelosia, e d'indi l'odio a guisa quello disse Tacito del Monte Libano, *mirum dictu, tantos inter*

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31 Ecclesiastes 4:4: "Rursum contemplatus sum omnes labores hominum, et industrias animadverti patere invidiae proximi."

tiousness that has made them moderate,” and thus they are “brave through fear and cowardice”;<sup>116</sup> similarly, Solomon in Ecclesiastes states in accordance with the Hebrew: “Again, I considered all labour and all excelling in work, that it is a man’s rivalry with his neighbour.”<sup>117</sup> This means that the vulgar virtues are jealousy, competition, and emulation, which men have towards their neighbours, which leads to a confusion of virtues with vices.

[36v] Pleasure, the main target that is so appealing to our soul, is always mixed with its opposite, pain, as Plato demonstrates in his *Philebus*.<sup>118</sup> Thirst and hunger are the greatest stimuli for our taste. Tragic plays disturb us and lead to our indignation against the tyrants. Nonetheless, we feel a secret itching and hankering for pleasure that greatly tempts and enraptures us. The Jews translate pleasure with the term תענוג, stemming from the verb ענה, which means “distressing pain,” to denote the aforementioned combination.<sup>119</sup>

Homer praised the impetuous agitation of ire as being full of joy and sweetness. In the same way, jealousy was born from the fervour of love, and from thence hatred. As Tacitus said of Mount Lebanon: “[it] is in fact a marvel, for in the midst of

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116 Plato, *Phaedo* 68d–69a: “Therefore, it is fear and terror that make all men brave, except the philosophers. Yet it is illogical to be brave through fear and cowardice. [...] What of the moderate among them? Is their experience not similar? Is it licentiousness of a kind that makes them moderate? We say this is impossible, yet their experience of this simple-minded moderation turns out to be similar: they fear to be deprived of other pleasures which they desire, so they keep away from some pleasures because they are overcome by others. Now to be mastered by pleasure is what they call licentiousness, but what happens to them is that they master certain pleasures because they are mastered by others. This is like what we mentioned just now, that in some way it is a kind of licentiousness that has made them moderate.” Luzzatto is quoting the Latin translation by Marsilio Ficino, *Phaedo vel de Anima. Omnia Platonis Opera Translatione (sic N. d. C.) Marsilii Ficini, & ad Graecum codicem accurata castigatio* (Venetiis: Apud Hieronimum Scotum, 1571), 286: “Metuendo igitur, atque metu fortes ita sunt omnes praeter philosophos, etsi absurdum est, metu vel timiditate aliquem esse fortem.... Qui inter eos moderati dicuntur, inquit, non ne simili quodam pacto affecti sunt, intemperantia videlicet quadam temperati? Quanquam impossibile id esse dicimus, veruntamen illis evenit affectio quaedam huic similis, in isthac eorum fatua temperantia. Timentes enim ne aliis careant voluptatibus, easque appetentes a caeteris abstinere, ab aliis superari: etsi vocant intemperantiam a voluptatibus superari. Veruntamen accidit eis, ut superati a voluptatibus, alias superent voluptates. Iam vero id illi simile est quod modo dicebatur, scilicet quodammodo per intemperantiam fieri temperatos.”

117 Hebrew: מריעהו, כי היא קנאת-איש, ואת כל-כשרון המעשה--כי היא קנאת-איש, מריעהו.

118 The issue is discussed in Plato, *Philebus* 31c–36b: “Human beings and other animals simultaneously undergo pain and pleasure. This happens for example whenever the processes of emptying and filling the body are involved. One can be pained by his condition of being empty and remembers the pleasant things that would put an end to the pain, without being yet filled.”

119 The verb ‘*anah*’ is attested in De Pomis’s dictionary with a double meaning of answering and of being oppressed, afflicted, and poor. See David De Pomis, *Šemaḥ David Dittionario Novo Hebraico Lexicon Novum Haebraicum* (Venetiis: Apud Ioannem de Gara, 1587) s. v. ‘*anah*, 128v–129r. However, De Pomis does not connect ‘*anah*’ to the verb ‘*anag*, “to take pleasure,” from which *ta’anug* is derived. See De Pomis, *Šemaḥ David*, s. v. ‘*anag*, 128v.



*ardores opacum fidumque nivibus.* Alessandro celebre non meno per le sue vittorie, che per le virtù dell'animo, così pietoso verso Dario, e sue donne, fu tanto poi dis-humanato contra Parmenione e Clito, che li consegnarono nelle mani il dominio del mondo, e così crudele con Calistene suo maestro. Giulio Cesare feroce, et inhumano in Farsaglia, ma clemente con Marcello, et indulgente con Brutto suo uccisore. Nerone, monstro dell'umanità alle volte si ramaricava di saper scrivere in decretare la morte a delinquenti, che non abborrì essercitarla contra la madre, et il [37r] suo maestro Seneca, era amico della virtù, e delle dottrine, ma l'odiava in altrui, ché perciò Lucano il più spiritoso poeta che giamai fosse perdé la vita. Nel tempo della crudel proscrittione ordinata dal triumvirato, ove la fede, la carità, la gratitudine presero esilio dalli più eminenti e ben composti spiriti della republica, non trovandosi in padri, figliuoli, fratelli, si ricovrarono fra l'abiettoni de servi, et obscenità de meretrici, in fra l'altre una di loro pati l'ultimi tormenti per non rivelare li suoi poco honesti amici. E Socrate nel sommo del suo sapere vi trovò l'ignoranza perciò giudicato dall'oracolo sapientissimo. La ma[n]suetudine poco irritata diviene indomita superbia, e questa con destrità manegiata si converte in piacevolezza mite, e pieghevole.

L'effigie interna del nostro animo è composta di mosaico, ch'in apparenza forma una sol idea et avvicinandoseli dimostra esser compaginata da varii fragmenti di pietruzze vili, e pretiose connesse e commesse insieme. Così l'animo nostro per il più, è composto di differenti, e discrepanti pezzi, che in varii occasioni ognuno di loro fa di sé distinta apparenza, onde il descrivere la natura, e conditione d'un sol huomo è cosa molto ardua e difficile, tanto più il volere tutte le sue attioni ad una sol norma, et idea riferirle.

Da quindi è che tanti autori si trovano [37v] haver scritto della natura de cani, cavalli, e falconi, e con tanta esattezza divisato li loro costumi, e conditioni, e circa l'huomo così pochi n'habbiano trattato, e solo alla sfuggita,

*the excessive heat its summit is shaded by trees and covered with snow.*<sup>120</sup> Alexander, famed both for his victories and for the virtues of his soul, was so full of pity for Darius and his women,<sup>121</sup> and yet he was so relentless towards Parmenion and Cleitus,<sup>122</sup> who placed the rule of the world in his hands, and so cruel towards Callisthenes,<sup>123</sup> his teacher. Julius Caesar, ferocious and inhuman in Pharsalia, was in contrast merciful towards Marcellus and indulgent towards Brutus, his murderer. Nero, a monster of humanity,<sup>124</sup> at times regretted knowing how to write when he had to write death decrees for delinquents. And yet he did not mind exercising it [i.e., this prerogative] against his mother, and [37r] his teacher Seneca. He was a friend of virtue and learning, but he hated these attributes in others. For this reason, Lucan, the wittiest poet that ever lived, lost his life. During the time of the cruel proscription ordered by the Triumvirate, faith, charity, and gratitude took leave of the most eminent and well-composed minds of the Republic, and were to be found in neither fathers nor sons, nor brothers. Then these virtues took refuge in the debasement of slaves and the obscenities of prostitutes. One of these prostitutes suffered the severest tortures, for she did not want to betray her mischievous friends.<sup>125</sup> Socrates found ignorance precisely when his wisdom had reached its peak. Thus, the Oracle acknowledged him to be the wisest man. Gentleness, when a little irritated, becomes indomitable pride, and this, managed with dexterity, changes into gentle and pliable affability.

The internal image of our soul is composed of a mosaic that appears to form a single idea. Upon approaching it, however, one sees that it is made up of various fragments of cheap and precious stones put together. In the same way our soul is, for the most part, composed of different and discrepant pieces, each of which on various occasions takes a distinct appearance. Thus, the description of a single man's nature and condition is a very arduous and difficult endeavour. It is even more difficult and arduous to relate all of his actions to a single rule and idea.

Hence, many authors happened to [37v] have written about the nature of dogs, horses, and falcons and have discussed their customs and conditions with great exactness. But very few have dealt with man, and when they have, they have done

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120 Tacitus, *Histories* V:6.

121 See glossary.

122 See glossary.

123 See glossary.

124 The same comparison and the same context, the paradoxical variety of the human soul, can be found in Michel de Montaigne, *Saggi di Michel Sig. di Montagna overo Discorsi, naturali, Politici, e morali trasportati dalla lingua Francese nell'Italiana per opera di Marco Ginammi* (In Venetia: Presso Marco Ginammi, 1633), book 2, chapter 1, "Dell'inconstanza delle nostre Attioni," 257: "E chi crederebbe, che Nerone, quella vera immagine di crudeltà, quando gli fu presentato da sottoscrivere, conforme allo stile, la sentenza di un delinquente condannato, fusse costui che avesse risposto, Piacesse a Dio che io non havessi giamai saputo scrivere."

125 See Lattes, *Ma'amar*, 160 n. 55.

chi meglio de tutti ne discoresse fu Theofrasto discepolo d'Aristotile, che risserbò tal impresa all'ultimi anni della sua vita essendo ottogenario, e ne compilò un trattato in modo historiale, et osservativo delli caratteri dell'animo humano, ch'hora si ritrova appresso di noi di lui un fragmento, il resto dall'ingiuria de tempi abolito.

E se così malagevole è il diffinire li costumi interni d'un sol huomo, che sarà poi in volere terminare quelli d'una intiera natione? E massime dell'hebreia, distratta per tutte le parte del mondo, ch'è impossibile il dirne cosa certa, e risoluta, essendo gli Hebrei disseminati per l'universo, et a guisa de fiume che scorre per lungo tratto di paese, che ricevono le sue acque impressione dalla qualità de diversi terreni ove passano. Così gli Hebrei dall'altre nationi ove dimorano acquistano diversi costumi, e perciò tanto differenti sono le maniere dell'hebreo venetiano dal constantinopolitano, e questo dal damaschino, e cagliarino, e tutti essi da tedeschi, e polachi.

Tuttavia s'alcuno ancora desidera indagare quali siano li loro costumi in universale potrebbe dire esser natione d'animo molto invilito, e [38r] fiacco, incapace nel stato presente d'ogni governo politico, occupati ne loro interessi particolari, poco overo niente providi del lor universale, la loro parsimonia avvicinarsi all'avaritia, admiratori molto dell'antichità, poco osservatori del corso presente delle cose, molti d'essi rozi de costumi, poco applicati alle dottrine, e cognitioni delle lingue. Nell'osservare la loro Legge, secondo il parer d'altrui, in alcune cose eccedendo il limite accostarsi alla scrupolosità.

Alli quali mancamenti si contrappongono altre qualità degne d'alcuna osservatione, fermezza e tenacità indicibile nella credenza, et osservatione della loro religione, uniformità di dogmi circa la loro fede per il corso di 1550 anni, che sono dispersi per il mondo, costanza mirabile, se non nell'incontrare li pericoli almeno nel sopportare le calamità, cognitione singolare della Sacra Scrittura, e sua interpretatione, humana carità, et hospitalità verso qualunque della loro natione, benché estero, e forastiero. L'hebreo persiano si condole, e compatisce del travaglio dell'italiano, la distanza del loco non cagiona in fra essi disunione,

so only fleetingly. The one who has done so better than anyone else is Theophrastus, Aristotle's disciple.<sup>126</sup> He set this undertaking aside for the last years of his life, when he was an octogenarian. He then compiled a historical treatise in which he wrote down his observations regarding aspects of the human soul. Only a fragment of the work exists, the rest having been destroyed by the injuries of time.

And if it is so difficult to define the interior habits of but one man, how can one proceed when one wishes to determine those of an entire nation?<sup>127</sup> This is especially true for the Jewish Nation, dispersed as it is throughout the world, so that it is impossible to say anything certain and reliable about it. For the Jews are scattered around the whole world like a river running through a long stretch of countryside, whose waters receive an impression from the quality of the various lands through which they pass. This is how the Jews acquire different ways<sup>128</sup> from the nations in which they settle. Therefore, the manners of the Venetian Jews differ substantially from those of Jews in Constantinople, Damascus, and Cagliari, and all of these are different from the Jews of Germany and Poland.

Nonetheless, should someone still wish to investigate the universal habits [they share],<sup>129</sup> one could say that they are a Nation of a fainthearted, cowardly, and **[38r]** half-hearted spirit, incapable in their present situation of any political government,<sup>130</sup> preoccupied with their particular interests, quite – if not completely – unaware of their universal ones. Their parsimony amounts to avarice. They greatly admire antiquity, and yet they are quite unobservant of the present course of things. Many of them are coarse in their customs, rarely applying themselves to studying or to learning languages. According to other people, they have a tendency to an exaggerated scrupulousness when observing their own laws.

Against their flaws one could set down other qualities worthy of some observation: a firmness and inexpressible tenacity in the observance of their faith and a uniformity of dogma regarding their beliefs during the course of 1,550 years of dispersion in the world.<sup>131</sup> This is a remarkable steadfastness, if not in encountering dangers, then at least in bearing calamities. They have acquired an unrivalled knowledge of Holy Scripture and its interpretation. They can be characterised by human charity and hospitality towards any member of their Nation, even if he is an outsider and a foreigner. The Persian Jew empathises and sympathises with the hardships of the Italian Jew. The distance between them causes no disunion among

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**126** See glossary. See also Veltri, "Individual Responsibility," 297.

**127** The Italian *costumi* was translated by Lattes as *tekhunot* (Lattes, *Ma'amar*, 105).

**128** See Lattes, *Ma'amar*, 106: *minhagin*.

**129** See Lattes, *Ma'amar*, 106: *middot*.

**130** See Veltri and Miletto, "Difesa inedita," 261: "No' i v'è pel suscitare el Stato, perché se trovan privi de corrispondenze, privi di forza, privi d'ajuti, de animo, de cuor, e de volontà."

**131** If the figure of the years is precise, by adding to it the year of the destruction of the Temple, the result indicates the years 1620/22 as a date for the writing of the treatise, or at least of this consideration.

essendovi l'uniformità della religione, circa li vitii carnali astinenza grande, assignati, e pontuali circa il conservare la stirpe loro impermista, et incontaminata, destità in molti de loro in trattare qualunque [38v] difficul|toso affare, soggettione, et ossequio verso qual si sia fuori della loro religione. Li loro errori, e delinquenze quasi sempre hanno più del vile, et abietto, che dell'atroce e grande. Per la qual cosa occorrendo, come spesso suole avvenire in qualunque nazione, che alcuno di loro commette alcun delitto, e transgredisce gli editti del Prencipe, molto agevole è il rimedio, e medicamento.

Li vitii dell'animo sono simili all'infermità del nostro corpo, che in due generi si dividono, alcune de loro benché gravissime, e perniziose siano, nulla di meno il solo medico con sue ordinarie purghe, et evacuationi è bastevole a superarle, e vincerle. Ma altre ve ne sono de più maligna qualità, ch'essendo contagiose e comunicative conviene all'istesso Prencipe, che vi s'impiega con le sequestrattioni, e trasporti accompagnandovi anco il terrore degli ultimi suplitii. Così ancora nell'attioni scelerate, ve ne sono alcune benché neffande, havendo per oggetto solamente il proprio piacere, e privato utile non hanno punto del diffusivo, e comunicativo, anzi che ristrette in pochi colpevoli non consentiscono essi, né complice alli loro proprii interessi e proffitti, che le loro facinorose attioni si comunicano con l'altri. Onde scoperte che sono, li magistrati ordinarii con li soliti castighi, e pene, di esilii, prigioni, galere [39r] mutilationi de membri, e l'istessa morte, sono bastevoli di correggere, et espugnare simili scelleratezze. E di tali qualità sono state l'enormità commesse in ogni tempo da alcuni della nazione sempre spinti da avidità de robba, o simili abbiettioni.

Ma vi si ritrova alcune spetii di esecrande attioni, che tengono del contagioso, e si estendano e penetrano in tutta una nazione, anzi che non è possibile il ridurre tale sceleratezze all'atto pratico se non con il mezzo d'una totale conspiratione come la felonìa d'un popolo, mutatione di religione, invasione de città, solevatione contra alcun ordine, e stato civile. Quali eccessi tanto più son spaventevoli, e terribili quanto che l'istessi suplitii, e pene, sono da delinquenti stimati premii, e gloriose ricompense delle loro operationi incontrando essi piuttosto festivamente la morte, che con horrore fugendola, come nella vendicatione della libertà, e mutatione de religione spesso volte occorre.

Nel caso dell'adoratione del vitello benché non tutti effettivamente avevano commesso quella sceleragine, e così ancora nell'amutinamento di Corach contra Moisè, tuttavia Iddio voleva castigare l'universale. E ciò avveniva per la dispositione, ché a tali eccessi tutti essi erano proclivi, e pronti, il che in altri peccati giamai non occorre, sempre destinguendo Iddio [39v] le delinquenze, et errori di cadauno del popolo. Nelli quali casi sopradetti

them, since they share the uniformity of religion. With regard to carnal vices, [they practise] great abstinence. They are careful and mindful of preserving their lineage, unmixed and uncontaminated. They are able to deal with any **[38v]** difficult business whatsoever. They usually display submission and respect towards anyone not belonging to their religion. Their errors and offences are almost always more spineless and wretched than atrocious. When it happens (as it often does with any nation) that one of their members commits a crime and transgresses the edicts of the prince, the remedy and relief are very simple.

The vices of the soul are similar to the infirmity of our body, which can be divided into two types. Some of them, despite being extremely serious and pernicious, can be overcome by the doctor alone with ordinary purges and draining; others are of a more vicious quality, and are contagious and communicative in nature. In such cases, it behoves the prince to sanction them with arrest and expulsion from the state, to which he can also add the terror of torture to death. In the same way, even though some criminal actions can be nefarious, they only serve personal pleasure and private advantage. [Thus,] they are not easily propagated, or contagious at all. Rather, these crimes are the prerogative of a few individuals, who will not agree to involve other people in their misdeeds in order to protect their own interests and profits. When such cases are discovered, the ordinary magistrates employ the usual penalties of exile, prison, galleys, **[39r]** mutilation of limbs, and death sentences, which suffices to eradicate such crimes. Of this nature were the majority of the crimes committed by some members of the Nation, as they were always motivated by greed or lucre, or similar wickedness.<sup>132</sup>

There are other kinds of execrable actions, however, which are contagious and can propagate and penetrate into the substance of an entire Nation. It is impossible to commit such crimes without constituting a general conspiracy such as the treason of a population (against the state), a deviation from the former religion, the invasion of a city, or an uprising against order and the civil State. These excesses are all the more frightful and terrible given the fact that the perpetrators consider the very same punishments and penalties to be rewards and glorious recompense for their operations. They face death with joy rather than fleeing it with horror, as often occurs with the recovery of liberty and religious deviation.

Be it in the case of the worship of the calf or that of Korah's mutiny against Moses,<sup>133</sup> these are examples in which God wished to punish the entire nation although not every person had actually committed the offence. He desired to do so because of the disposition of the people, who were all inclined towards such excesses and prone to being carried away by them. Such tendencies had never occurred with other sins, where God distinguished among **[39v]** the delinquencies and errors that befell some individuals of the population. In the aforementioned cases, the

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**132** This argument has already been anticipated in the "Preface to the Entire Work," 5v–6r.

**133** See Exodus 32 and further remarks in the glossary.

non sono sufficienti li ordinarii rimedii, da magistrati subordinati somministrati, ma conviene ch'il supremo Prencipe v'intravenga con l'eminenza della propria maestà e suprema autorità, e che procura l'esterminatione del male, con il totale eccidio, ovvero almeno con l'universale esilio.

Le prave operationi degli Hebrei non furono giamai di simile perniciosa natura, non solo nella città di Venetia, ma n'anco in alcun altro loco per il corso d'anni 1550 in circa. Ben è vero che nelle memorie delli historici antichi si lege certa commotione della natione hebrea che seguì a tempo di Traiano in Alessandria, e poco dopo in Cipro, ma questo fu allhora, che gli Hebrei partecipavano del governo delle città, e vicini alli tempi della captività seguita per Tito, onde conservavano ancora alcuni temi della loro natia ferocità. Né si può persuadere che il re di Spagna capitasse a nostri giorni a quella rigorosa, e totale espulsione de granatini popolo così numeroso, e ripieno di agricoltori, et altri artisti per cagione d'alcun latrocinio, assassinio, o particolare delinquenza commessa da 15 o 20 d'essi, e che perciò devinisse a resolutione tanto dannevole a suoi regni, et admiranda appresso il mondo. Ma certamente l'interni motivi di sì severo decreto fu [40r] al|cuna secreta conspiracy da lui scoperta, che serpeggiava in tutta detta natione granatina, che piuttosto forsi meritava eccidio, che esilio, e non ha dubbio alcuno che il dannare l'universale per il particolare è contra la norma naturale, et amaestramento della Legge Divina.

Non si trova cosa in questo mondo di sì eccellente perfettione, che non le sia annesso, et ingiunta sovvente per il pravo abuso alcun male: il ferro sopra modo bisognoso, che somministra materia a tanti varii instrumenti alla vita humana necessari, molte volte è mezzo d'uccisioni e stragi. Il favellare che tanto nobilita il nostro genere, ben spesso è cagione de sciagure e ruine, né perciò vi fu alcuno così scrupoloso legislatore, che proibì la escavatione, et estratione del ferro dalle minere, e divietò il ragionare all'huomo. In quanto poi alli documenti della Sacra Scrittura troviamo ch'essendo trascorsi li delitti degli habitatori de Pentapoli al sommo

ordinary remedies that subordinate magistrates administered were not sufficient; it is thus sometimes necessary for the supreme prince to intervene with the legitimate power of his title and his supreme authority. He must procure the extermination of the evil with multiple executions, or at least with collective exile.

The criminal acts of the Jews were never of such a harmful nature – neither in the city of Venice nor in other places throughout the course of approximately 1,550 years.<sup>134</sup> It is indeed true that in the writings of the ancient historians, one reads of a certain commotion of the Jewish Nation that occurred at the time of Trajan in Alexandria, and shortly afterwards in Cyprus.<sup>135</sup> But this happened during a time when the Jews participated in the government of the city and around the time of the captivity inflicted by Titus, when they still preserved some traces of their natural ferocity. Nowadays it would be an unpersuasive [argument] for the king of Spain to decide to rigorously expel all Granadans, a people so numerous and full of farmers and other artisans, because of some act of larceny, assassination, or any other offence committed by 15 or 20 of these people. It is unlikely that he would follow that resolution so detrimental to his kingdom and so surprising for the whole world as a response to such trifling crimes. Yet the secret reasons for such a severe decree were [40r] surely justified because he uncovered a secret conspiracy that was about to pervade the entire Granadan Nation.<sup>136</sup> Therefore, it might well-deserve slaughter instead of exile. There is no doubt that condemning the many for the crime of the one is against natural law and the teaching of divine law.

One finds nothing in this world of such great perfection that some evil is not attached or added to it by malicious abuse. Iron, such a necessary [material], used to make a great variety of instruments essential to human life, is very often the means of murders and destruction. Speech, which lends so much nobility to our species, is often the cause of misfortune and ruin. Despite this, there has never been a legislator so scrupulous that he prohibited the excavation and extraction of iron from the mines, or forbade men to speak. In the documents of the Holy Scripture, we find that when the crimes committed by the inhabitants of Pentapolis had

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**134** See consideration XVIII, 89r, where Luzzatto says that the Jews have spent 1,550 years in the Diaspora.

**135** See glossary. For a discussion of the facts and annexed sources, see E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), chapter 15, “The Jewish Revolt of A.D. 115–117,” especially 393–415.

**136** See glossary. For a discussion of the facts and annexed sources, see Ana Echevarría, *Knights on the Frontier: The Moorish Guard of the Kings of Castile (1410–1467)* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 206–7; Bernard Vincent, “The Geography of Morisco Expulsion: A Quantitative Study,” in *The Expulsion of Moriscos from Spain: A Mediterranean Diaspora*, ed. Mercedes García-Arnal and Gerard Wiegers (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 20–21; Leonard Patrick Harvey, *Muslims in Spain, 1500 to 1614* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), especially chapter 1, “The Beginnings of Crypto-Islam in the Iberian Peninsula,” 1–44 and chapter 6, “Crisis and War: Granada 1567–1571,” 204–37.



apice delle sceleratezze, et enormità, si compiaceva Iddio che l'innocenza de dieci huomini potesse riparare alli flagelli, che tanta numerosità di popolo meritava, tanto è lontano che pochi delinquenti d'una natione siano bastevoli a provocare la publica indignatione contra l'universale di essa.

reached the highest point of viciousness and magnitude,<sup>137</sup> it pleased God that the innocence of ten men was able to make up for the punishments that so great a number of the people deserved.<sup>138</sup> In conclusion, there is but a small chance that a few delinquents of a nation are sufficient to provoke public indignation against the whole nation.

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**137** See Genesis 14:1–12.

**138** See Genesis 18:32.

## CONSIDERATIONE XII

### *L'oppositioni fatte contra gli Hebrei da tre generi de persone e loro resolutioni*

[40v] La natione hebrea da tre generi de persone è aggitata, et oppugnata da zelanti della propria religione, da politici e statisti, da comuni e volgari. Reclamano li zelanti che sia in dispreggio della propria religione il permettere in un Stato quelli che non prestano assenso alla comunamente approbata. A quali facilmente si risponde che dovrebbero in ciò moderare il zelo della loro pia mente vedendo, et osservando che il sommo capo della christiana religione nella città della sua propria residenza admette gli Hebrei, che già sono scorsi più de 800 anni, che in detta città v'hanno ferma stanza, e stabile domicilio, e con somma giustitia, e carità governati, e retti. Per il che non deve alcuno in materia di religione pretendere de saperne più ch'il capo d'essa.

Dicono li politici, che non conviene in un'istessa città tollerare diversità di religione sì per il scandalo, e mal esempio, che dalli uni all'altri può derrivare, come per li dissensioni, disunioni, odii, che fra li habitanti d'essa città può avvenire.

In quanto alla prima istanza se li risponde, che [41r] non può succedere scandalo, e mal esempio per esser così poco comunicanti insieme gli Hebrei con Christiani, e tanto differenti de riti, et anco per la varietà delle lingue, che

## CONSIDERATION XII

### *The Replies to the Arguments Used against the Jews by Three Kinds of People*

[40v] Three kinds of people argue against and antagonise the Jewish Nation: religious zealots,<sup>139</sup> politicians and statesmen, and the common and vulgar people. The zealots claim that it is contemptuous of their own religion to allow those who do not practise the commonly approved religion into the state.<sup>140</sup> One can easily respond that they should moderate the zeal of their pious minds because they can see and observe that the supreme leader of the Christian religion admits Jews into the city of his own residence and that they have been there for more than eight hundred years. In that city, they have an established space and permanent residence, and they are governed and ruled with the greatest justice and charity.<sup>141</sup> Thus, no one is entitled to claim to know more about religion than the supreme Christian leader himself.

Politicians say that it is not beneficial to tolerate a multitude of religions in the same city both because of the scandal and the bad example that one group makes for another, as well as the dissent, disunity, and hatred that can arise among the inhabitants of the city.<sup>142</sup>

With regard to the first argument, one answer would be that [41r] no scandal or bad example has occurred so far, since the Jews communicate so infrequently with the Christians. [In addition,] the rites and even the languages in which their

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**139** We accept Roubey's translation. See Lester W. Roubey, "The 'Discorso circa il stato degli Hebrei' (1638): Of the Italian Rabbi Simone (Simha ben Isaac) Luzzatto with an Introduction on the Life and Work of the Author" (rabbinic thesis, Hebrew Union College, 1947), 69.

**140** This was the main accusation brought forward by Cardinal Grimani against the Venetian Jews. See Veltri and Miletto, "Difesa inedita," 258–59: "El mazor fondamento sora del qual ha stabelido l'eccellentissimo Grimani la machina con la qual el pretende atterar questo asilo che la vostra benignità anzi il dover procurar de mantegnir all'Ebraismo, sè la Religion.... Set[t]a in Venetia contraria alla vera Religion e se sopporta? Dogmi opposti alla vera fede e s'ammette? Insegnamenti contrarii al vero Dio e si omette? Seguaci d'altra Legge che di Cristo e i se trascura? Documenti repugnanti all'Evangelio e no' i se scazza via?"

**141** A friend and confrere of Paolo Sarpi, Fulgenzio Micanzio, signed the *imprimatur* for the *Discourse*. This suggests that Sarpi could have been acquainted with the work. See Veltri, *Filosofo e Rabbino*, 337.

**142** See Veltri and Miletto, "Difesa inedita," 260: "Ma supponemo che ei sian de Religion tanto diversa da quella dei Catolici come ha preteso de dimostrar l'eccellentissimo Grimani, se ben che non è, La mi perdoni. Due sorte di motivi posson mover un Principe a scazzar dai suoi Stati persone che vivessero de Religion contraria, o vero el scrupolo che el podesse haver che questi con i loro falsi insegnamenti, con i loro dogmi contrarii alla verità, andassero insinuando nella mente del popolo Religion contraria alla Catolica, o vero el dubbio che questi potessero comover el Stato e sussitar in questo delle guerre// [3v] delle risse, e delle rebellion."

li loro libri sono composti. Vi s'aggiunge la prohibitione, così all'uni come all'altri del convivere insieme, et in particolare l'osservanza degli Hebrei circa il gustare molti cibi, che non li sono leciti conforme a loro riti, come anco li commercii carnali, che oltre al divieto delle loro leggi, da editti del Principe parimente interdetti, e li transgressori severissimamente castigati. V'è ancora, che la impotenza, e soggettione degli Hebrei cagiona, che da qualunque fuori della loro religione si trova, sono scansati, e sfugiti, e di rado alla loro credenza si convertono.

In quanto poi alla discordia, e disensione, se li dice non esser gli Hebrei con li christiani contrarii, come il nero al bianco, ch'essendo ambi loro sotto il genere del colore non si compatiscono, ma diversi a guisa del dolce et il rosso, ch'essendo affatto distratti, e non comunicanti, salvo che sotto il genere generalissimo della qualità, insieme nell'istesso soggetto si compostono, e si ritrovano. In tal maniera parimente sono divisi, et astratti [41v] gli Hebrei da christiani, che di rado per occasione di religione vengono a gara e tenzone insieme, tanto più essendo l'hebreo per la conditione de tempi, e precipuo suo istituto alieno d'ogni pensiero di propagare, e dilatare la sua religione occupato solamente in superare le sue urgentie e necessità. E non aspira di migliorare in niuna guisa la sua conditione in universale, il che attentando è sicuro, essendo ciò riferito a magistrati, conseguir nell'ultimo supplitio.

Altra oppugnatione adducono li politici contra la natione, et è l'essercitio dell'usura delitto non solo dannato dalle leggi divine, ma proibito universalmente dalle civili, come exterminatore delle facultà, et eversore delle famiglie, onde il poeta *Hinc usura vorax avidumque in tempora fenus,*

books are written differ significantly. One may add the prohibition against Christians and Jews living together, and in particular the observance of the Jews regarding the many foods that they are not permitted to eat according to their rites.<sup>143</sup> The same holds true for carnal relationships,<sup>144</sup> which, apart from being forbidden by their laws, are also forbidden by the edict of the prince, and transgressors are punished most severely. In addition, the continuing subjugation and powerlessness of the Jews means that anyone who is not Jewish shuns and avoids them. [Moreover,] conversions to Judaism are extremely rare.

With regard to discord and dissension, one answer could be that the Jews are not different from the Christians as black is from white. Black and white do not match, although they belong to the same genus of colour.<sup>145</sup> On the contrary, Jews and Christians are different from each other in the same way as the qualities of being sweet and being red, which are absolutely separated and unrelated to each other. Thus, [their only connection is] that they belong to the most general genus of quality that can be found in the same subject. In the same way, [41v] the Jews are separate and distinct from the Christians, and only rarely do they come into competition and contention regarding religious matters, all the more so because a Jew, as a result of the conditions of the times and in compliance with his principal religious laws, is alien to any thought of propagating and spreading his religion.<sup>146</sup> He worries solely about overcoming his own urgencies and needs. Moreover, he does not aspire in any way to improve his condition in a universal sense. And if he should try, his actions would undoubtedly receive the most severe punishment, since the matter would be referred to the magistrates.

Another attack that politicians raise against the Jewish Nation is the practice of usury, a crime that is not only condemned by divine law, but universally prohibited by civil law, for it dissolves property and destroys families. As the poet [says,] “[h]ence came devouring usury and interest that looks greedily to the day of pay-

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**143** See Leone Modena, *Historia de Riti Hebraici, Vita et Osservanza de gl'Hebrei di questi Tempi*. (Venezia: Appresso Benedetto Miloco, 1638), 47–51.

**144** See *ibid.*, 87.

**145** See Aristotle, *Categories* § 11 (14a15–14a21): “It is clearly the nature of contraries to belong to the same thing (the same either in species or in genus).... All contraries must either be in the same genus or in contrary genera, or be themselves genera. For white and black are in the same genus (since colour is their genus).”

**146** See Veltri and Miletto, “Difesa inedita,” 260: “Nissun de questi motivi havè, Prencipe Serenissimo, de mandar via i Ebrei, non el timor d'introdur diversa Religion, perché per parte sua non la procuran, mentre no i insegnan.”

al che si ridice, che l'usura essercitata dagli Hebrei è piuttosto tollerata dalle loro leggi ch'esspressamente admissa e concessa, e come più oltra si dirà. Ma di più ancora si può affermare con gran probabilità, che rarissimi siano quelli che con l'usura si mantengono, la ragione di ciò è ch'essendo li dispendii domestici degli Hebrei grandissimi, non è persuasibile, che sostentar si possono con un impiego non concesso, né permesso dalle leggi del Prencipe.

Oltra di ciò parimente non è in potestà [42r] dell'hebreo in alcun tempo astringer il christiano alla scossione della sua robba, et una fiata che ha impiegato il suo capitale non può più sviluparlo, ma deve aspettare la volontà, e comodità d'esso christiano di volerlo dispegnare. E se li Monti di Pietà come di Padoa, Vicenza, e Verona ch'hanno li centinaia di migliaia di ducati impiegati in servitio de bisognosi non potessero in capo d'un anno far vender li pegni, in breve tempo restarebbero esausti de danari, con li loro capitali imbrogliati, et invilupati. Onde non è persuasibile che gli Hebrei rispetto a questi di mediocri haveri, e di tenui facultà potessero lungo tempo durare, e reggersi in sì svantaggiosi partitti, tanto più havendo attitudine di potere legittimamente negoziare, esponessero le loro facultà a soggettione tale, e si può credere esser questo, se pur è, piuttosto trattenimento de pupilli e vedove, che di trafficanti.

Ma di più m'affronto con li sopradetti huomini esperimentati nelli affari del mondo con rappresentarli quel celebre detto di Tacito circa l'esilio de matematici giudiciarii dalla città di Roma, *Quod in civitate nostra et vetabitur semper et retinebitur*, così dovrebbero giudicare della usura, peccato continuamente dannato, ma in ogni tempo e loco essercitato, concorrendovi due stimoli maggiori,

ment.”<sup>147</sup> To which one replies that the usury practised by the Jews is tolerated by their laws rather than expressly accepted and permitted, as I will show later on.<sup>148</sup> In addition, one can say, and even confirm as very probable, that it is extremely rare for Jews to support themselves through usury; their domestic expenses are so high that it is not persuasive for them to maintain themselves through employment that is neither allowed nor permitted by the laws of the prince.

Furthermore, it is also not in [42r] a Jew’s power to force a Christian to redeem his property at any time, and once the Jew has used his capital, he can no longer regain it, but must wait to do so at the will and convenience of the Christian, wishing to redeem his pledge.<sup>149</sup> And if *Monti di Pietà*<sup>150</sup> like those in Padua, Vicenza, and Verona, which have hundreds of thousands of ducats employed in the services of the needy, were not able to sell the pledges within a year, they would run out of money very quickly, with their capital tied and bound. Thus, it is even more unpersuasive that the Jews, whose possessions and wealth are mediocre and unsubstantial [in comparison to these pawnshops], would last long in the profession and continue in such unfavourable conditions, or that they would expose their capital to such subjection, if they had access to legitimate negotiations. It is thus plausible that this business, if it is such a thing, pertains more to the support of widows and orphans than to the mercantile profession.<sup>151</sup>

I could bring even more arguments to answer the aforementioned politicians,<sup>152</sup> who are experienced in the ways of the world, and I would present them with that famous saying of Tacitus regarding the astrologers who were sentenced to exile from the city of Rome: “*A tribe which in our state will always be both forbidden and retained.*”<sup>153</sup> Usury should be judged in the same way, as a sin continuously damned, but practised in every time and place. Two great incentives contribute to

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**147** Lucan, *On the Civil War* I:181. The same verse is also quoted by Francis Bacon in his *Essayes*, XV, “Of Seditions and Troubles,” 45: “Hinc usura vorax, rapidumque in tempora foenus.” The context is, however, different, because Bacon was discussing the danger to the stability of the state posed by poverty. For the similarities between Luzzatto’s idea of usury and Bacon’s, see Giuseppe Veltri, “Economic and Social Arguments,” 24–25. Luzzatto could also have read Walter de Châtillon (carmen VI, line 36). Accordingly, see Frederic J. E. Raby, ed., *The Oxford Book of Medieval Latin Verse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 291: “Sciat artes aliquis, sit auctorum plenus, / quid prodest, si vixerit pauper et egenus? / Illinc cogit nuditas vacuumque penus, / hinc usura vorax avidumque in tempore fenus.”

**148** See 47r–v, 55v–56r.

**149** Theoretically, Deuteronomy 15:3 authorises the Jews to press a foreigner to pay his debt; practically, the Jews had no power to act so when they were living in Christian kingdoms.

**150** See Brian Pullan, “Jewish Banks and Monti di Pietà.”

**151** The situation must have been slightly different from the one Luzzatto describes if the saying was “M’ho consumà aspettandote, ben mio, / più che non se consuma un pegno in ghetto.” See Umberto Fortis, “Due note sul Ghetto di Venezia,” *Hadashoth* 30 (2015): 12–13.

**152** Literally “aforementioned men.”

**153** Tacitus, *Histories* I:22.



ch'habbia la nostra fragilità, la necessità del mutuario, [42v] che contribuisce l'usura, e l'avidità insaziabile del mutuante, che la riceve. E quando non fusse commessa dall'hebreo tal transgressione, non vi mancherebbero forse altri, che con maggior estorsione dell'indigente, e bisogno, essercitassero tal prava professione, riducendosi a minor numero gli usuraii. E ch'in tal proposito per infamiare la nazione l'appellò sentina, cloaca d'ogni lordo negotio, con l'improperio, e calunnia significò fors' il bisogno, e l'urgenza, essendo alla nave la sentina, et al sontuoso palazzo la cloaca di somma necessità. E questo non dico già per difesa di tal attione, ma solo per dimostrare, che tale enormità, come alcune altre non sono proprietà essenziali degli Hebrei, come molti presumano asserire, ma piuttosto accidenti seguaci alla strettezza del vivere, e conditioni de tempi.

Alli volgari, che agevolmente li vien sugerito, e persuaso qualunque calunnia, e maledicenza finta, e machinata in odio della nazione, se sono capaci d'alcuna eruditione si potrebbero admonire alla lettura de antichi dottori, et historici, che trattarono d'avvenimenti de primieri christiani, come Tacito fra gentili, e Tertuliano fra christiani nell'*Apologetico*, ché osservarebbero quante false imputationi furono attribuite a [43r] quell'innocente gente. E si potrebbe congiettare, che l'istesso hora può avvenire agli Hebrei da huomini alla nazione poco amici.

Il primo narra, che havendo lo spietato Nerone fatto accendere la città di Roma mosso d'ambitione di rifarla in miglior maniera, per scaricarsi poi dall'odio concepuli contra dal popolo, calonniò l'innocenti christiani di quel tempo, che da essi fosse stato tal misfatto commesso, e li sententiò, che invogliendoli nel bitume, e zolfo fossero accesi, e posti la notte nelle pubbliche strade della disfatta città, acciòché servissero al popolo romano per fanali, e lucerne.

Il secondo acremente diffende li suoi dall'improperio dell'infanticidio apposto a christiani con tanta mendacità, che del sangue d'innocenti fanciulli, si servissero nel celebrare loro cerimonie, impostura tanto incredibile, et aliena d'ogni probabilità. Il ch'anco appresso gli Hebrei più d'una volta suscitò tragici avvenimenti, e massime ne paesi oltramontani, che tuttavia l'istesse difese usate dal predetto eloquen-

its increase: the need of the borrower, [42v] who has to pay the amount of usury, and the insatiable greed of the lender who receives it. Both incentives actually stem from our human fragility. If such a transgression were not committed by a Jew, there would be no lack of others who would practise such a contemptible profession through greater extortion of the poor and needy, thereby reducing the number of [Jewish] usurers.<sup>154</sup> With regard to this issue, there have been those who, in order to discredit the Jewish Nation, labelled it the bilge or sewer of every dirty deal. Perhaps with this insult and slander they mean to indicate urgency and need, for a ship needs a bilge and a sewer is of the utmost necessity for a sumptuous palace. I do not say this to defend such actions, but merely to demonstrate that such an enormous transgression, like some others, is not an essential prerogative of the Jews, as many presume to assert, but rather an accidental result of the strictness of the life and conditions of the time.

The common people can easily be persuaded by any calumny and slander, however false, invented out of hatred towards the Jewish Nation. If these people were capable of any learning or insight, they could be asked to read the ancient sages and historians who dealt with the events surrounding the earliest Christians, such as Tacitus among the Gentiles and Tertullian among the Christians in the *Apology*. Thus, they would be able to see how many false imputations were made against [43r] these innocent people [i.e., Christians]. One could suggest that nowadays the same is happening to the Jews, troubled as they are by men who are hardly friends of the Jewish Nation.

The first [i.e., Tacitus] relates that Nero set fire to the city of Rome, pushed by his ambition to rebuild the city better than it was before. Afterwards, he blamed innocent Christians, claiming that they had committed this crime so as to divert the people's hatred to someone else. He sentenced them to be burned, first covering them in pitch and sulphur and then placing them in the public streets of the destroyed city at night so that they would serve as streetlights for the Roman people.<sup>155</sup>

The second [i.e., Tertullian] boldly defends his people against the infamous accusation of infanticide. With great dishonesty, the Christians were accused of using the blood of innocent children to celebrate their ceremonies – an imposture that is quite incredible and far from plausible.<sup>156</sup> The same accusation has been brought against the Jews on more than one occasion and has led to tragic events, especially in the countries lying beyond the Alps. The very same arguments used by the above-

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**154** The Italian text is unclear. In Lattes's interpretation, Luzzatto means that if the Jews were not practising usury, there would be fewer usurers and the few left, because of a lack of competition, would exploit the poor by charging more interest (Lattes, *Ma'amar*, 109–10 and 161 n. 66). Another possible interpretation is that given the fact that the Jews were taking no more than five per cent interest (consideration IX, 33r), if the Christians were to take over, there would be fewer Jewish usurers, but the Christian usurers would take more interest and therefore exploit the poor.

**155** Tacitus, *Annals* XV:44.

**156** Tertullian, *Apology* VII–IX.

tissimo dottore potevano servire ancora alla nostra infelice natione, e massime per l'astinenza rigorosa dall'assaggiare il sangue d'animali brutti, tanto più l'humano, et in uso religioso.

**[43v]** Il credere a publici rumori, e volgari strepiti, è un avventurare la propria fede a turba di temerarii, e poco accurati testimonii. L'istessa verità per diffendersi dall'insulti del tempo, et acquistar corpo, e vigore si prevale molte volte dell'appendici della volgar fama, a guisa di quelle donne, che per apparire più maestose si aggiungono a piedi smisurati additamenti, et alcuni altri per condire, et insaporire i loro ragionamenti come di gustevole aromato, vi mescolano la bugia.

La verità è per se stessa rozza, e poco agradevole, la falsità ammiranda, e dilettevole, quella è soggetta all'avvenimento delle cose, questa libera e vagante. Quella è prodotta dall'attione dell'oggetto che l'imprime nella nostra mente, questa tutta dipende dall'arbitrio humano, e come parto nostro se li porta amoroso affetto, ma questo se dice delle bugie volontarie, e da chi le produce conosciute per tali. Altre ve ne sono di apparenza più monstuosa, che occupata la mente da torbida passione e fosca ignoranza accoppiandosi con la volontà partoriscono sozza e diforme proge-  
nie, et è da Platone nell'*Ippia minore*, dannata con molto maggior rigore, che la prima, vessando, et infettando ambe le più nobili facoltà del nostro animo. E tali bugie, e mendacità si dovrebbero sfugire, almeno dall'aplausio degli huomini prudenti, ch'ascoltandoli con **[44r]** di|letto se li presta alimento di durabile vita.

E non è dubbio, che la natione hebrea fra l'altre calamità è sottoposta alle calunnie, et infamie più che qual si sia altro per l'impunità di calunniatori, e mescolandosi ben spesso il vero con il falso, perciò riescono più perniciose l'invettive, che contra essa si fanno, e di più accurato ingegno ha bisogno per separare, e dividere il finto dal reale.

E se la natura priva d'alcun affetto riggetta alle parti più deboli del nostro corpo l'humori corrotti, tanto più si può suporre che gli huomini agitatti da perturbationi, e passioni, s'inducano in caricare alla più fiacca, et

mentioned most eloquent scholar could have been used in advocacy of our unfortunate Nation, mostly in connection with the rigorous abstinence from tasting the blood of brute animals, and all the more so from that of humans for religious use.

[43v] Belief in public rumours and vulgar accusations leads to the exposure of one's own faith to a crowd of rash and inaccurate witnesses. In order to protect itself from the insults of time, and to take on flesh and vigour, truth often takes advantage of the residues of vulgar publicity. The same course of action is taken by women who use *chopines* in order to appear more majestic.<sup>157</sup> Some other people, in order to season and flavour their conversations, mix truth with lies as if they were using a pleasant condiment.

Truth alone is harsh, and not very pleasing, whereas falsity is admirable and delightful. The former is subject to the occurrence of events; the latter free and wanton. The former is produced by the action of the object that impresses truth in our mind, while the latter depends upon human judgment, and as if it were our offspring, we harbour loving affection for it. But one says this of voluntary lies, for the one who produces them acknowledges them as such. Other lies have a more monstrous appearance, because while the mind is engulfed in turbid passion and dark ignorance, it mates with the will and bears filthy and deformed progeny. In the *Lesser Hippias*, Plato damns these lies with much greater rigour than the first type. Both types vex and infect the noblest faculties of our soul. Such lies and mendacity must vanish, at least from the approval of prudent men, who, listening to them with [44r] delight, keep nourishing them and allow them to survive for a very long time.

Among other calamities, the Jewish Nation is unquestionably subject to slander and infamy more than any other nation because of the impunity of the slanderers. Furthermore, since truth and lies keep intermingling, the invectives against the Nation become more and more pernicious. Thus, one needs sharper intelligence to separate and divide falsity from substantiality.

And if nature, deprived of any affection, rejects corrupt humours and sends them to the weakest parts of our body, there is all the more reason to suppose that men, agitated by perturbations and passions, are led to charge the weakest and

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<sup>157</sup> Luzzatto is probably referring to the typical Venetian fashion of wearing *chopines*, which were wooden- or cork-soled, open-backed platform clogs first worn by Venetian courtesans and then very popular among rich aristocratic women, the height of the platform becoming a symbol of status. Zoccolos were a version of *chopines* with two stilts instead of the platform. For this definition, see Margo DeMello, *Feet and Footwear: A Cultural Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara California: Greenwood Press, 2009), "Europe," 111–12. See also Andrea Vianello, "Ladies or Courtesans? Reading the Venetian Chopine and Renaissance Women," in *Shoes: A History from Sandals to Sneakers*, ed. Giorgio Riello and Peter McNeil (Oxford: Berg, 2006). For satire and religious and moral polemic against luxury and chopines, see Eugenia Paulicelli, "Sister Arcangela Tarabotti: Hair, Wigs and Other Vices," in *Writing Fashion in Early Modern Italy: From Sprezzatura to Satire*, ed. Eugenia Paulicelli (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 198 ff.

imbecile, l'improperii, e calunnie. Ma di più se li dice, che mentre adossano agli Hebrei delitti gravissimi, et intollerabili, e come di cose notorie ne affermano, non meno ingiuriano gli Hebrei, di quello censurano l'accurata provvidenza del loro Prencipe, pretendendo essi con occhi di notola prevalere alla lincea vista del loro Prencipe, che giamai tralascia d'inquirire, indagare, e meditare le più occulte, et abstruse attioni de suoi sudditti. Et in che maniera si può sostenere, ch'essi a cui non appartiene il sapere li misfatti degli Hebrei, tuttavia ne sono tanti raguagliati, e che il publico a cui incombe tal provisione con tanta connivenza n'è sì mal avisato? E massime che per la strettezza delle loro stanze, e cohabitationi è [44v] im|possibile, che attione facinorosa non sia dal vicino scoperta, et osservata, e per conseguenza agevolmente a magistrati rivelata, allettato dal premio o stimolato dall'odio, et emulatione, passioni che ingombrano l'animo degli Hebrei al par di qual si sia altro. Onde dovrebbero li calunniatori risegnare la loro curiosità nella grave, e fondata provvidenza del publico governo, e supporre per massima indubitabile, che quello, che non è advertito e castigato dal Prencipe, dopo sì strepitose reclamationi, essere senza dubbio vana menzogna, e temeraria falsità.

Ma fra tutte le calunnie a mio credere, è improbabile il dire, che gli Hebrei di Venetia avisano alli corsali di Barbaria, la partenza di vascelli dalla città, partecipando con essi della preda. Il che per più ragioni si convince esser vana machinatione: qual commertio, e fede possono havere gli Hebrei con corsali? Che gli precipi, e monarchi potentissimi, non hanno potuto stabilire giamai con essi loro alcun patto, e conventione? E se pur ne contrassero furono tante volte delusi? In che maniera può arrivare gli avvisi ad essi corsali non v'essendo alcun passaggio ordinario da Venetia in Barbaria?

Quattro sono li nidi de corsali, nel lido d'Africa over Barbaria, Tripoli, Tunisi, Biserta, et Algieri. Con Tripoli non v'è alcuna [45r] comunican|za addirittura se non per mezzo di Zante e Morea over per via di Malta, viaggio di quasi un mese, convien prima capitar gli avvisi in detti doi lochi per via di mare, over di terra, insino a Malta, e da indi transferirli in Tripoli. Quanto sia dubbioso il viaggio maritimo ognuno lo sa, conviene poi allestire gli vascelli di corso, e di nuovo navigar alla volta degli vascelli mercantili, e saper il loco ove incontrarli. Per inviar avvisi a Tunisi convien prima capitare a Livorno, over Malta, e d'indi per via di mare a Tunisi, ove s'incontra nell'istessa difficoltà ch'è di Tripoli. Biserta non arma se non galee, e fa una sola espeditione all'anno nel tempo dell'estate, et ha costume depredare terre, e non prender vascelli se non per accidentale incursione, non potendo trattenersi sopra il mare in aspettarli, sì per il disagio del gran numero de gente, che

most powerless nation with insults and lies. Furthermore, one might say that while the slanderers accuse the Jews of the most serious and intolerable crimes and confirm these to be the most renowned deeds, they do not only injure the Jews. By doing so, they criticise the accuracy of their prince's foresight as well. They claim that their owl eyes are able to prevail over the lynx eyes of their prince, who never stops inquiring, investigating and thinking about the most hidden and abstruse actions of his subjects. How can one contend that these slanderers, who are not supposed to be acquainted with the wrongdoings of the Jews, are nonetheless quite well-informed, and the public institutions, whose business it is to know, are poorly informed, as if they turned a blind eye to them? Furthermore, since the Jewish houses are so small and squashed together, it is [44v] impossible for any lawless action to go undiscovered or unobserved by the neighbours. These crimes are therefore easily revealed to the magistrates, since [the neighbour] is tempted either by reward or by hatred and rivalry, passions that fill the Jews' souls as much as the souls of others. Thus, the slanderers should restrain their curiosity and leave it to the serious and well-founded foresight of public government [to pursue these crimes]. They should adopt as an unquestionable maxim that whatever has gone unnoticed and unpunished by the prince, after such ardent protests, is doubtless a vain lie or a hasty conclusion.

I believe that among all the slanders, the most absurd is the claim that the Jews of Venice inform the Barbary corsairs about the departure of ships from the city and share the booty with them. There are many reasons to be convinced that such a claim is a vain machination: what relationship and alliance can the Jews share with corsairs? Were the all-powerful princes and monarchs ever able to establish pacts and agreements with the sea-robbers by themselves? And if there were such contracts, were they not broken frequently? In what manner can information get to these corsairs, given that there is no regular passage from Venice to Barbary?

The corsairs have four nests on the coast of Africa, or Barbary: Tripoli, Tunis, Bizerte, and Algiers. There is no direct communication with Tripoli, [45r] except by means of Zante and Morea<sup>158</sup> or Malta. A voyage of almost a month is needed before information may be brought to the aforementioned places by sea, or by land, until it arrives in Malta. And from there, it would have to be transferred to Tripoli – and everyone knows how uncertain a voyage by sea is. It is then necessary to equip the seagoing ship, to sail towards the mercantile vessels, and to know where to meet them. In order to send information to Tunis, one must first go to Livorno or Malta, and go from there by sea to Tunis, where one encounters the same difficulty that exists in Tripoli. Bizerte only equips galleys, and makes only one expedition per year, in the summer. In addition, these pirates are accustomed to plundering lands and not taking ships except by accidental attack, since they cannot remain on the seas in wait for them, both because of the discomfort of the great number of people

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158 See glossary.

conducono, come per esser le fuste, ovvero galere non disposte a regersi contra la furia del mare. Algieri oltra gl'impedimenti sopradetti di Tunisi e Tripoli, v'è ancora la lontananza dal Levante, che di rado fortificano in questi nostri mari, essercitando il loro corso nel stretto ovvero fuori d'esso nella parte occidentale.

Ma non so parimente come gli corsali si dispongono a partecipare con gli Hebrei de loro [45v] svaligiamenti, e bottini, essendo da se stessi abbastanza informati del viaggio de vascelli, e del tempo che si partiscono da Venetia. Qual è quel imperito marinaio, che non sia raguagliato da se stesso, che li venti maestrali soliti a spirare nell'estate, conducono gli vascelli dall'Italia alla parte meridionale, et in Levante? Quanti schiavi christiani, et ancor rinegatti, pratici pedotti, periti nocchieri tengono, che l'informano di tutta la navigatione venetiana, e che li conducono in qualsivoglia sito, e porto, che desiderano, senza premiare, e partecipare con gli Hebrei de loro guadagni, e profitti?

Come anco è incredibile, ch'essendo molti vascelli in gran parte carichi d'haveri d'Hebrei, che esponessero le facultà de loro amici, e parenti in mano de corsali barbari, et infedeli, per rihaverli da loro, ponendoli in pericolo così manifesto, e certissima perdita, anzi che gl'istessi Hebrei ne sarebbero delatori, et accusatori per evitar li proprii danni. Nemmeno vale il dire, che gli Hebrei s'inducano a commettere simil delitto, per la speranza, che hanno di mercare quelli svaligi a vil prezzo, poichè già è notorio, che nelli predetti lochi di corso vi concorrono con frequenza grande Francesi, Inglesi, e Fiaminghi, rissedendovi ancor loro consoli, e proprii rappresentanti, capitandovi ordinariamente loro vascelli, carichi de [46r] munitioni, e merci, oltre anco l'Italiani, Genovesi, e Livornesi, che vi negoziano. Onde ch'arrivandovi alcuna preda, la natione hebrea, meno può sperare l'incontro d'alcuna buona fortuna d'investita, che qualsivoglia altra ch'ivi si ritrova, essendo la più tenue, e meno facultosa dell'altre. Dall'improbabilità di questa imputatione il prudente lettore potrà argomentare la fiacchezza de molte altre a questa infelice natione attribuite, et imposte.

they carry and because these galleys cannot hold up against the fury of the sea. As for Algiers, aside from the aforementioned impediments of Tunis and Tripoli, it is very far from the East, and pirates are rarely strong in our seas, for they are used to raiding the Straits [of Gibraltar] or the western part outside of it.

Similarly, I do not know why the corsairs would be prepared to share their [45v] loot and plunder with the Jews, since they are themselves well-informed about the ships' expeditions and the time they leave from Venice. What inexperienced sailor does not know by himself that the mistral winds usually blow in the summer, leading ships from Italy to the south and to the east? How many Christian slaves, renegades, experienced pilots, and expert helmsmen keep them informed about the entire Venetian navigation, and lead them to whatever site and port they desire, without needing to reward the Jews or to share their profits and earnings with them?

Given the many ships loaded mostly with goods belonging to Jews, it is equally implausible that the Jews would then expose the wealth of their friends and relatives to the Barbary corsairs, who are infidels, placing it in such great danger and almost guaranteeing a loss, only to then regain it from them. It is even more unlikely that the Jews would be informers and accusers [against these corsairs] in order to avoid harm to themselves. And it is not convincing to say that the Jews would be induced to commit such a crime with the hope of selling their booty at a low price, since it is already well-known that in the aforementioned pirate towns, the French, the English, and the Flemish meet very regularly. Their consuls reside there, and their own representatives usually arrive there with their ships that are full of goods and [46r] ammunition. And then there are also the Italians, the Genoese, and the Livornese who trade there. Indeed, arriving there with some of their booty, the Jewish Nation has less hope than anyone else of meeting with good fortune from such an investment, since the Jews are the least powerful and least wealthy of all. The improbability of this accusation shall lead the prudent reader to conclude how weak many other accusations expressed against this unhappy Nation may be.



## CONSIDERATIONE XIII

### ***Che la Legge antica mosaica istituì che si dovesse usar carità verso tutto il genere humano***

Quelli celebri riformatori dell'antica gentilità, che la providero d'institutti, e leggi, come huomini che furono, così parimente ebbero li loro pensieri, et attentati terminati e limitati. Solone si contentò erudire con sue leggi gli Atheniesi, Ligurgo Sparta, e Romulo il sol recinto del suo angusto asilo si compiacque instituire. Del restante del genere humano non si curarono, come se privo quasi d'ogni humanità fosse. Gli haveri degli altri huomini fecero a proprii cittadini, leciti il depredare, concessero occuparli la libertà, et insino permisero ch'alcuni esteri sopra gli altari de [46v] loro falsi dèi per vittime si offeriscono.

Ma la Legge d'Iddio promulgata da Moisè per tutta la nostra spetie provide e procurò, e siccome una sol natura da Iddio fu instituita nel mondo che tutte le sue parti con armonioso concerto insieme dovesse unire, e con reciproca simpatia reggesse. Così decretò, che tutto il genere humano con unanime amistà insieme corrispondesse, dovendosi qualunque huomo cittadino d'una sola republica reputare, inestando nell'animo humano tale amore, e carità con amaestrarlo, et instruirlo che siccome da un sol Iddio fu creata et hebbe origine la sua spetie, così da un solo padre Adamo fu propagata, e di nuovo da Noè diramata, onde il profeta Malachia, capitolo 2, *Nunquid non pater unus omnium nostrum? Nunquid non, Deus unus creavit nos? Quare despicit unusquisque nostrum fratrem suum, violans pactum patrum nostrorum*,<sup>32</sup> usa due motivi a farci concepire questo tenero affetto di amarsi l'un l'altro, et evitare le reciproche ingiurie: prima per esser derivati da un sol padre, e perciò esser tutti consanguigni, egualmente liberi, e parteci et heredi d'alcuna portione de beni del mondo, secondo, essendo tutti noi creature, e productioni d'un solo Iddio. E non dice che siamo uniti in un sol culto et adoratione, che sarebbe argomento proprio per indurre buona corrispondenza fra gli Hebrei solamente, ma argomenta con [47r] ragione efficacissima e generalissima per la conciliatione di tutti gli huomini. E non è credibile che nel tempo del diluvio fossero proibite le usurpationi, estorsioni, e fraude indifferentemente a tutti, che perciò furono dannati alla somersione, e poichè al popolo hebreo che si incaminava a maggior perfettione che l'altre nationi li fosse stato concesse simili depravationi, et eccessi.

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<sup>32</sup> Malachias 2:10: "Numquid non pater unus omnium nostrum? Numquid non Deus unus creavit nos? Quare ergo despicit unusquisque nostrum fratrem suum violans pactum patrum nostrorum?"

## CONSIDERATION XIII

### ***The Ancient Mosaic Law Decreed that Generosity and Kindness Must be Practised towards All Humankind***

Those famous reformers of the old heathen world, who provided it with institutions and laws, were nonetheless human beings. Hence, their thoughts and endeavours were limited and restricted [to their human capabilities]. Solon contented himself with teaching his laws to the Athenians.<sup>159</sup> Lycurgus did the same in Sparta.<sup>160</sup> Romulus merely condescended to establish the enclosure of his narrow refuge.<sup>161</sup> They did not concern themselves with the rest of the human race, as if it were deprived of humanity as such. They allowed their own citizens to prey upon the possessions of other men and to impede their freedom. They even permitted them to sacrifice some strangers [46v] on the altars of their false gods.

But the Law of God promulgated by Moses provides for and attends to the entirety of our species. God created nature so that all the parts of the world would be kept together in harmonious concert and governed by mutual sympathy. In the same way, He decreed that all humankind should live together in mutual friendship. Every human being should regard himself or herself as a citizen of one republic. He imbued the human mind with love and charity by teaching it that in the same way that one God created and gave rise to the human species, so it was propagated from one father, Adam, and [then] Noah spread it once again. Therefore, the prophet Malachi in chapter two [says]: “Does there not exist *one father of all of us*? *Hath not one God created us*? *Why do we despise our brother, profaning the covenant of our fathers?*”<sup>162</sup> [The prophet] names two reasons for nourishing that tender inclination towards loving each other and avoiding mutual injuries. We must do so first for having been descended from one father and therefore all being blood relations, equally free, and partaking in and inheriting some portion of the goods of the world. Second, we are all creatures made by one single God. [The prophet] does not say that we are united in one cult and worship, which would be the proper argument for inducing a good relationship only among the Jews. Instead, he argues with [47r] very convincing and general reasons for the reconciliation of all men. It does not seem credible that during the time of the flood, usurpation, extortion, and fraud were prohibited to everyone indiscriminately, for which reason humankind was condemned to drowning, yet such turpitudes and excesses were permitted to the Jewish people, who were striving for a perfection greater than that of the other nations.

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159 See glossary.

160 See glossary.

161 Livy, *From the Founding of the City* I:7,3; Plutarch, *Lives*, “Theseus and Romulus” IX:4.

162 Hebrew: הלוֹא אֶב אֶחָד לְכוֹלֵנוּ, הֲלוֹא אֵל אֶחָד בְּרָאנוּ; מְדוּעַ, נִבְגַּד אִישׁ בְּאֶחָיו--לְחַלֵּל, בְּרִית אֲבוֹתֵינוּ.

E nel Decalogo nell'istesso tenore e generalità fu proibito l'homicidio, l'adulterio, et il furto, non escludendo alcuno passivamente da tali preceti. E non è dubbio che l'homicidio, e l'adulterio furno preceti universali, e dalla specificatione che usò la Scrittura nel fatto della usura, ch'interdisse, e vietò essercitarla con l'Hebreo, ma la tollerò con l'alieno per esser contratto patuito con la volontà et assenso del contrahente e mutuuario, si convince indubitatamente, che le frodi, e violentie usate con l'estero senza la sua intelligenza, e volontà siano dalla Legge dannate, e proibite, non havendo in queste dichiarato alcuna distintione come nella usura.

E quando la Scrittura nel Levitico disse, *nolite affligere contribules vestros, sed timeat unusquisque Deum suum*<sup>33</sup> il senso hebreo è non ingannate il vostro contrahente conforme la frasa della Scrittura, ch'usò la parola di (*hamitò*) che secondo grammatici hebrei significa quello ci è [47v] contro, e dirimpetto, derivando dalla dittione (*humat*) cioè qualunque contrahente, e stipulante. E nell'Esodo capitolo 22 espressamente proibisce l'ingannar l'estero,<sup>34</sup> e di più quando gli Hebrei furono introdotti in Terra Santa, li fu anco limitato precisamente il termine del loro dominio da tutti li lati, non essendoli lecito il trapassarli. Quello non fu osservato d'alcuna gente, e natione, estendendo il loro dominio insin ove che li guidava la loro buona fortuna, e li concedeva adito la propria forza, e violenza, conforme il detto di Euripide, over Cesareo, *nam si violandum est ius, regnandi*

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<sup>33</sup> Leviticus 25:17: "Nolite affligere contribules vestros, sed timeat unusquisque Deum suum."

<sup>34</sup> Exodus 22:21: "Advenam non contristabis, neque affliges eum: advenæ enim et ipsi fuistis in terra Ægypti."

In the Decalogue, in the same manner and in wider terms, homicide, adultery, and theft were prohibited, and no one could evade the punishments for transgressing those precepts. There is no doubt that homicide and adultery are universal sins. The Scripture offers specifications as far as the activity of usury is concerned. Usury is prohibited and forbidden to employ when the Jews are involved.<sup>163</sup> However, [the Scripture] tolerates it with regard to foreigners, since it is a bargain contracted with the assent of both the money-lender and the one who borrows the money.<sup>164</sup> There can be no doubt that the fraud and oppression of a stranger without his knowledge or consent are condemned and prohibited by law, there not being any distinction between them in the case of usury.<sup>165</sup>

When the Scripture said in Leviticus “*And ye shall not wrong your fellows; but each of you shall fear his God*,”<sup>166</sup> the meaning of the Hebrew text is that one should not deceive one’s contracting party, according to the text of the Scripture, which uses the word *hamito*.<sup>167</sup> According to the Hebrew grammarians, this word signifies “he who is [47v] opposite and across,” for it stems from the word *humat*, designating any contractor or stipulator.<sup>168</sup> In Exodus chapter 22, deceiving a foreigner is emphatically prohibited.<sup>169</sup> Furthermore, when the Jews entered the Holy Land, the boundaries of their dominion were also precisely established on all sides, and they were not allowed to cross them. Such prohibition was not observed by any other people or nation. They extended their dominion as far as their good fortune guided them and their own strength and violence allowed them. This is in accordance with the saying of Euripides about Caesar: “*If wrong may e’er be right, for a throne’s*

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**163** See Exodus 22:24: “If thou lend money to any of My people, even to the poor with thee, thou shalt not be to him as a creditor; neither shall ye lay upon him interest.” Leviticus 25:35–37: “And if thy brother be waxen poor, and his means fail with thee; then thou shalt uphold him: as a stranger and a settler shall he live with thee. Take thou no interest of him or increase; but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee. Thou shalt not give him thy money upon interest, nor give him thy victuals for increase.”

**164** Deuteronomy 23:20–21: “Thou shalt not lend upon interest to thy brother: interest of money, interest of victuals, interest of any thing that is lent upon interest. Unto a foreigner thou mayest lend upon interest; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon interest; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all that thou puttest thy hand unto, in the land whither thou goest in to possess it.” See also Talmud Bavli, Bava Metzia 70b.

**165** See Talmud Bavli, Bava Metzia 61b.

**166** Hebrew: וְלֹא תוֹנוּ אִישׁ אֶת-עֲמִיתוֹ, וִירֵאתָ מֵאֱלֹהֶיךָ : כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֶיכֶם.

**167** Note the transliteration of the Hebrew letter ע with *h*.

**168** In the Latin translation, Luzzatto uses the same Latin word, “*vulgata*,” in referring to people who belong to the same tribe, nation, and religion, while in the explanation of the Hebrew word, he retains the meaning of *umat* understood as “someone who stays in front of.” See, for example, how De Pomis translates ‘*amit* as “*socius, proximus, compagno domestico familiare*” and *le-umat* as “*contra adversum*” (De Pomis, *Šemaḥ David*, s.v.). However, Lattes says that the two words stem from a different root (Lattes, *Ma’amar*, 161 n. 74).

**169** Exodus 22:20: “And a stranger shalt thou not wrong, neither shalt thou oppress him; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.”

*gratia violandum est*, e li Spartani dicevano il confine del lor dominio arrivar insin'ove che poteva giunger la punta della lor spada. Li Romani posero meta, e termine al lor imperio orientale l'Eufrate, ma da Parti prima tante volte rimessi, e regitati.

Ma gli Hebrei solo dalle lor leggi, ne proprii limiti, ratenuti e raffrenati, e non è credibile, che li profeti tanto esagerassero contro le nationi, che li usurpavano, et opprimevano, quando li fosse stato permesso l'usare simili ationi contro di quelle. Et è cosa certa, et indubitata, ch'appresso gli Hebrei è tenuto maggior peccato il defraudare colui, che fuori della loro religione si trova, che il proprio Hebreo, anzi tal delitto è annoverato con gli appellati di profanatione del nome d'Iddio, ch'è l'estremo della [48r] sceleratezza, ché perciò credono gli Hebrei esser irremissibili, e che a tali transgressori Iddio leva li soccorsi ordinarii, e soliti suffragi, ch'offerisse a penitenti per giustificarli, arreccando questi tali transgressori occasione a popoli di svilire, e calunniare l'hebraica institutione, e rendere la nazione maggiormente odiosa a popoli, con quali si dovrebbe fare rimostranza di maggiore esemplarità.

Et il sopr'allegato Filone scrive, che sebbene fu commesso agli Hebrei il dispregiare, et estermiare gli idoli d'antichi gentili, mentre erano vinti e soggiogati, tuttavia quando si trovavano sciolti e liberi, era proibito agli Hebrei con publica irrisione schernire li detti idoli per non provocare vicendevolmente gli etnici al dispreggio del vero Iddio, in vendetta del ludibrio usato verso gli loro falsi dèi. Ma udiamo le sue proprie parole tradotte dal greco, *non permittit effreni lingue petulantia conviciari Diis creditis falsa persuasione aliarum gentium, ne ille irritatae prorumpunt in voces nefarias contra Deum optimum Maximum*. Perché nell'istesso modo non sarà proibito, et interdetto agli Hebrei qualunque si sia attione scelerata di frode, inganno, et estorsione verso qualunque alieno dalla loro religione? E massime per non arrearli occasione di proferire alcuna esecranda biastemmia, et improprio contra la loro Legge, et institutione, con pericolo [48v] d'ingiuriare l'istesso Iddio principale institutione.

Si trovano in tal proposito alcuni notabili documenti nella Scrittura. Eliseo benché ricevesse donativi, e regali da Hebrei, come attesta la Scrittura, tuttavia dopo haver rissanato da lebre insanabile Naaman generale del re di Damasco che lo vessava, e volendolo l'etnico damaschino presentare un mediocre donativo non volse riceverlo, ma generosamente lo ricusò come

sake / Were wrong most right.”<sup>170</sup> The Spartans used to say that the limits of their dominion reached as far as they were able to put the points of their swords. The Romans placed the Euphrates as the limit and boundary of their oriental empire, but they were first many times repulsed and thrown back by the Parthians.

Nonetheless, the Jews alone were held back and restrained within their own limits by their laws. And it is not credible that the prophets would have reproached the nations who usurped and oppressed the Jews to such an extent if the Jews had been permitted to take similar actions against them. It is indisputable and indubitable that among the Jews it is considered a greater crime to deceive one who is outside their religion than one’s coreligionists.<sup>171</sup> Rather, this crime ranks similarly to speaking the profanation of the name of God, which amounts to the extremity of [48r] wickedness. Therefore, the Jews consider it unpardonable. [They also think] that God removes from such sinners the usual grace and the ordinary atonement he offers to other sinners to justify themselves. Such transgressors give nations the occasion to disparage and slander Jewish institutions and make the Nation greatly odious to the peoples to whom they should demonstrate a higher degree of justness.

The above-mentioned<sup>172</sup> Philo wrote that the Jews were commanded to despise and exterminate the idols of the ancient Gentiles when they were conquered and subjected. However, it was prohibited for the Jews – when they were unbound [i.e., from the engagement of the law] and free – to scorn those idols with public mockery so as not to reciprocally provoke the heathens to deride the true God in revenge for the ridicule employed towards their false gods. But let us hear his own words, translated from the Greek: “Yet he counsels them that they must not deal in idle talk or revile with an unbridled tongue the gods whom others acknowledge, lest they on their part be moved to utter profane words against Him who truly is.”<sup>173</sup> Why should the Jews not be forbidden in the same way to deride any criminal action, fraud, or extortion perpetrated against anyone outside their religion? Because no occasion must be given to non-Jews to proffer any abhorrent blasphemy or impropriety toward the Jewish laws and institutions with the risk [48v] of abusing God Himself, who is the chief institutor.

Some remarkable teachings can be found on this subject in the Scripture, which attests that Elisha used to receive presents and gifts from the Jews. Nevertheless, after having cured Naaman, the general of the king of Damascus, of the incurable leprosy that troubled him, the Damascene heathen [i.e., Naaman] wanted to give him a mediocre gift. Elisha did not want to accept, and generously declined it, as

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170 Cicero, *On Duties* II:21,8. Cicero took the quote from Euripides, *Phoenissae* 524–25.

171 However, as Lattes pointed out (*Ma’amar*, 162 n. 78), Luzzatto’s thesis is problematic.

172 In fact, Philo has not been mentioned before. Luzzatto probably changed the order of the considerations forgetting that he had removed Philo’s quote. It is therefore plausible that the considerations were written in a non-chronological order and were revised and put into the order we see in the printed version at a later stage.

173 Philo, *On the Special Laws* I:53. Same in Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* IV:138.

nel capitolo de Re si legge, anzi che Ghechazì suo creato per haver seguito, e richiesto clandestinamente da detto Naaman certo regalo, fu perciò scacciato da Eliseo, e dannato ad una infettione perpetua di lebre indelebile, con tutta la sua posterità, per dimostrare a quel gentile e suo re, quanto era distratto da avidi pensieri d'occupare quello d'altrui mentre che rifiutava quello che per premio della sanatione gli era offerto. Così Abram ruscò ritenersi le ricchezze riacquistate dalli quatro re di Soria, e Mesopotamia, che prima depredarono dalli re de Pentapoli, che pure Abram *de iure gentium, et belli*, le poteva rattenere, nondimeno volse far apparire quale fosse la sua ottima institutione, et eccellenza di costumi, e magnanimamente rilasciò quel bottino al re di Sodoma, e colegli, primieri padroni di esso. E quegli Hebrei dimoranti sotto il dominio di Asuero re di Persia essendoli permesso [49r] per editto regale la vendetta nella vita de nemici, e svaligio della lor robba, eseguirono l'una, e si astenero dall'altro. Li quali esempj devono essere così osservabili da chi professa la Legge hebraica, come il mantenimento de preceti cerimoniali in essa contenuti, che pure con tanta scrupolosità da ognuno di loro sono eseguiti.

Si può alli sopradetti esempj aggiungere l'affettuosa oratione, et intercessione de Abram verso Iddio per la salvatione di quelli scelerati di Pentapoli, li quali non solamente erano esclusi dalla institutione religiosa e culto che osservava Abraham, ma erano spogliati affatto d'ogni apparenza d'humanità, e così Iona punito da Iddio, e posto in sì gran pericolo di vita per haver ruscato di riprender, et admonire li Nineviti de loro esecrande enormità. Da quali ambi avvenimenti habbiamo chiari amaestramenti quanto qualunque persona deve implorare Iddio per la salute di qual si sia altro huomo, come anco procurare con l'admonitione ridurlo a miglior stato, se non di perfetione almeno moderare l'eccesso di suoi vitii.

Ma perché circa il giuditio che si fa volgarmente di questa natione occorrono le falacie consuete a farsi nelle conseguenze debolmente fondate, e mal intese, cioè usare l'equivocatione de nomi, non destinguere le circostanze individuali, e di concludere [49v] le propositioni universali dalla inductione di pochi particolari, per il che conviene chiarire, e ventilare questo punto con molta esatezza, dal che saranno risolte e rese vane molte imputationi et imposture attribuite in questo proposito alla natione.

we read in the chapter from Kings.<sup>174</sup> And when Gehazi, his servant, followed the said Naaman and secretly requested a gift from him, Elisha banished him and cursed him and all his descendants with incurable leprosy.<sup>175</sup> In this way, Elisha demonstrated to both the Gentile and his king how far he was from greedy thoughts of gaining possessions belonging to others. In a similar way, Abram refused to keep the riches regained from the four kings of Syria and Mesopotamia that they had earlier seized from the kings of the Pentapolis. Although he *de iure gentium et belli* was allowed to keep them,<sup>176</sup> he wanted to show his exceptional institutions and excellent customs. Thus, he magnanimously left that treasure to the king of Sodom and his followers, who were its original owners.<sup>177</sup> The Jews living under the rule of Ahasveros,<sup>178</sup> king of Persia, having been permitted [49r] by royal decree to take their enemies' lives in revenge and to plunder their possessions, carried out the former and refrained from the latter.<sup>179</sup> These examples should be considered by those who profess to know Jewish Law, as well as the ceremonial precepts that the Law dictates, which they all follow all with the greatest scrupulousness.

One can add to the above examples the solicitous speech and intercession given by Abram toward God for the salvation of the wicked inhabitants of the Pentapolis. Not only were they excluded from the religious institutions and cult Abraham observed, but they were also entirely deprived of any appearance of humanity.<sup>180</sup> A similar speech was given by Jonah when he was punished by God and placed in mortal danger for having refused to reprehend and admonish the Ninevites in their detestable misdoings.<sup>181</sup> From both these events, we can draw clear conclusions as to how much each person should beseech God for the welfare of all other men. In the same way, [every person] should attempt to admonish others to improve their conduct, if not to perfection, at least to moderate the excesses of their vices.

Yet the judgment which is commonly passed on this Nation is influenced by common fallacies which are allegedly based on feeble grounds and misunderstandings – such as the misinterpretation of names, or a failure to distinguish individual circumstances, or the drawing of [49v] general conclusions from the induction of a few details. Thus, it is crucial to clarify and discuss this point with the utmost precision, so that the main charges, accusations, and falsifications imputed to the Nation will be corrected and neutralised.

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174 2 Kings 5:1–19.

175 2 Kings 5:20–27.

176 According to Lattes (*Ma'amar*, 162 n. 81), this is a reference to Hugo Grotius, *De iure pacis et belli* (1626).

177 Genesis 14:13–24.

178 See glossary.

179 See Esther 8 and 9:1–10.

180 See Genesis 18:20–33.

181 See Jonah 2:3–10.



Tengo per certo che la principal cagione della illusione procede dall'abbracciare sotto il nome di alieno tutte le nationi egualmente, e credere che appresso gli Hebrei senza alcuna distintione tutte le genti che sono fuori del rito hebraico doversi trattare, e misurare ad un istesso modo. Ma se con diligenza, alcuno s'applicherà a quello che la Scrittura in tal proposito ne ragiona troverà che con tanta distintione han trattato, che agevolmente si li potrà levare dall'animo ogni scrupolosa dubbietà. Fece menzione con gran espressione d'alcune nationi esteri confinanti a Terra Santa, con distinguere li modi, e maniere che con esse gli Hebrei si dovessero diportare. Ad alcuni ordinò che si li dovesse procacciare l'ultimo eccidio, altri che se dovesse abborire la loro conversatione, non dovendosi in alcun tempo con la loro posterità benché convertita alla religione hebrea mescolarsi senza però effettivamente offenderli, altri che non si dovessero abominare, e che in terzo grado, convertiti che fossero si potessero indifferentemente unire con il popolo, altri poi trapassò senza farne **[50r]** alcuna menzione, lasciando il tutto in arbitrio della natione.

E non è dubbio ch'essendo la Scrittura aditata da Iddio che scorge nella sua eternità l'infinito avvenire non solo istituì l'Hebraismo circa quelli picciol popoli, e genti spetiali nominati nella Scrittura confinanti a Terra Santa, che in breve et angusto spatio di tempo sapeva dover esser aboliti et estinti, che n'anco il loco della loro antica stanza si era per riconoscere, ma con la specificatione di tali nationi rappresentò la differenza de popoli, la diversità de costumi, e le maniere con quale il popolo verso di loro dovesse osservare: gli Cananei rassembrano gli idolatri esecrandi sacrificatori d'huomini, e proprii figliuoli, adulteri, incestuosi, ch'insino con bruti si mescolavano, che perciò li dannò all'ultimo eccidio, per li Amalechiti, rappresentò li dishumanati persecutori, che senza alcun ragionevol'impulso con odio più che timoniano procurano l'esterminio del genere humano, che perciò parimente li sentenziò al totale esterminio con assoluta abolitione della loro memoria, non essendo da Iddio meno abborito l'odio che si porta agli huomini, che l'inosservanza de costumi proprii all'humanità.

Per li Moabiti, et Amoniti, rafigurò l'ingrati non ricordevoli del legame del sangue, né del nodo della beneficenza, che havendo avuto la loro stirpe comune **[50v]** con gli Hebrei. E parimente Lot loro originario padre, ricevè tanti favori, e benefitii da Abram patriarcha, con tutto ciò ricusarono concederli mediocre rinfrescamento, e necessario sovenimento in quel lungho viaggio fatto nel deserto, perciò Iddio proibì di procurarli alcun beneficio, e vietò in sempiterno con loro unirsi

I am certain that the main cause of these (self-)deceptions proceeds from invariably calling all the other nations alien, and from the belief that the Jews should treat or evaluate all those who do not participate in the Jewish rites in the same way without any distinction. Yet anyone who applies himself to the teachings of the Scripture regarding this matter will find that it employs such a meticulous distinction so as to remove any hesitations or doubts from the soul. [The Scripture] makes detailed references to some foreign nations bordering on the Holy Land and it distinguishes the modes and manners in which the Jews should conduct themselves towards them. It states that some should receive ultimate destruction, that one should abhor any intercourse with others, and that indeed one should never at any time mingle with their progeny, even if they convert to the Jewish religion, without harming them. Others should not be abhorred, and, after their conversion, the third generation could indiscriminately be integrated into the people. Others are passed over without making **[50r]** any mention of them, leaving everything up to the free will of the Nation.

There is no doubt that Scripture is revealed by God, who is eternal and perceives the infinite future. Hence, it instituted Judaism among those small peoples and special nations mentioned in it as neighbouring the Holy Land. In fact, He [God] already knew that they would be extinguished and become extinct in a brief and limited period of time so that not even the place of their former dwelling would be known. Nonetheless, by precisely specifying these nations, [the Scripture] represents the differences between peoples, the diversity of customs, and the conduct the Nation should adopt towards them. The Canaanites embody the idolaters, abhorrent sacrificers of men and of their own children, the adulterers, and the incestuous, who even lie with animals. For this reason, the Scripture condemned them to ultimate destruction.<sup>182</sup> The Amalekites are called inhuman persecutors, who without any reasonable motivation, with a hatred greater than Timonian's, procured the extermination of humanity. Likewise, [the Scripture] sentenced them to total extermination, with the absolute elimination of their memory, the hatred that they bear toward humanity no less abhorred by God than the inobservance of appropriate human customs.<sup>183</sup>

The Moabites and Ammonites represented the ingrates who are used to forgetting the ties of blood or the knot of beneficence. For they have a common ancestor **[50v]** with the Jews, and Lot, their original father, received many favours and benefits from the patriarch Abram. Despite this, they refused to give ordinary refreshments and necessary assistance during the long journey, made in the desert. Hence, God prohibited us from giving them any benefits and perpetually forbade uniting

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**182** Deuteronomy 7:1–5.

**183** Exodus 17:8–16 and Deuteronomy 25:17–19.

in parentato, ma ancora interdisse il danneggiarli, perché effettivamente non ricevé il popolo da essi alcun oltraggio.

Gli Edumei, incorsero nell'istessa ingratitudine, ma perché seguirono l'esempio d'Amoniti, e Moabiti, e per la consanguinità e fratellanza de Esaù appellato (Edom) con Iacob, et anco perché gli poteva scusare la gelosia di Stato in lasciarli transitare nel mezzo del loro paese, fu proibito il molestarli, e che in terzo grado con loro apparentare fosse concesso. Con l'istessa conditione, simili alli Edumiti furono trattati gli Egittii con temperata pena per il stratio che fecero agli Hebrei in quello lungo hospitio che gli prestarono nel loro paese, fu interdetto l'offenderli, e che solo in terzo grado fosse permesso il mescolarsi con loro. E se fu permesso nell'uscir d'Egitto il spogliarli d'alcuni pretiosi supelletili fu per ricompensa della servitù che tanti anni a profitto degli Egittii sopportono.

In quanto poi a Palestini, Damaschini, et altri confinanti settentrionali, et occidentali non havendo [51r] ricevuto gli Hebrei da loro in quel travaglioso viaggio alcuno favore, né offesa, essendo situati in parte, che non li poteva da essi rissultare cosa alcuna, non diede la Scrittura alcun documento come si dovessero praticare e conversare, ma conforme l'occasione, et opportunità corrisponder dovessero a loro buoni overo pravi portamenti. Così in ogni tempo incontrandosi gli Hebrei in conditioni, e costumi di genti simili alli predetti, devonsi con loro usare conforme la regola, e norma sopradetta nella legge instituita.

Hor dunque se li fu comesso non oltragiare, abbominare, e nocere gli Egittii per cagione come esprime la Scrittura nel Deuteronomio capitolo 23 di quel infelice e tirranico hospitio ch'ebbero nel loro paese, benché havessero tolerata sì calamitosa oppressione in fabricare vastissime moli de piramidi, et erigere altissime mura glie, e di più per lieve sospetto di Stato il loro re dannò li loro piccioli fanciullini maschi ad esser sommersi nell'acqua avanti che fossero consapevoli d'alcuna colpa anzi che assagiassero la vita, in che maniera può alcuno sostenere che agli Hebrei sia permesso offendere nocere, et usare estorsione alcuna a quelli popoli, che gli concedono libera stanza, e grata abbitatione, e [51v] che li comunica l'ordinarie comodità indifferentemente come agli altri sudditi, e con tanta ingratitudine ricompensare, e sodisfare a tali, e tanti benefitii? Questa è ragione sì efficace, et argomento tanto concludente, che doverebbe rendere l'animo di qualunque più irritato verso la natione placido, e ben affetto.

with them in marriage. Nevertheless, He prohibited harming them, since the Jews did not actually receive any injury from them.<sup>184</sup>

The Edomites committed the same ingratitude.<sup>185</sup> Since they followed the example of the Ammonites and Moabites, and because of the consanguinity and fraternity of Esau, called Edom, with Jacob, and also because one can excuse their political jealousy in not letting them [i.e., the Jews] pass through the middle of their country, it was prohibited to molest them and it was permitted to marry them in the third degree. The Egyptians were treated similarly to the Edomites,<sup>186</sup> with moderate punishment for the torment they inflicted on the Jews during that long period of refuge they granted them in their country. Hence, it was thus forbidden to harm them. And only in the third degree was it permitted to intermarry with them.<sup>187</sup> And if during the time of the Exodus it was permitted to deprive them of some valuable goods, it was a reward for the servitude the Jews endured for so many years to the profit of the Egyptians.

As for the Philistines, Damascenes, and other northern and western neighbours, the Jews **[51r]** received neither favour nor offence from them during that most laborious voyage, since they lived in an arid place where nothing could be grown. Therefore, Scripture did not give any instructions on how the Jews should act towards them. Instead, they were supposed to respond to their good or bad behaviour in conformity with the occasion and opportunity. Every time the Jews encountered conditions and customs of people similar to those above, they were supposed to behave in accordance with the above-stated rule in the instituted law.

So this is why they were enjoined not to offend, abominate, or harm the Egyptians, as Scripture asserts in Deuteronomy 23, for that unhappy and tyrannical refuge they were given in their country, although they had endured such calamitous oppression in building the very large structures of pyramids and erecting very high walls. In addition to this, even when their king, on a trifling suspicion of state, condemned their male babies to be submerged in water before they could be conscious of any fault, before they had even tasted of life,<sup>188</sup> they were not allowed to avenge it. In view of these facts, how can anyone maintain that it is permitted for the Jews to offend, harm, or employ any extortion against those people who give them free residence and pleasant habitation and **[51v]** who grant them ordinary benefits as to other subjects? And how can anyone maintain that the Jews would pay back and reciprocate so many benefits with so great an ingratitude? This is so convincing a reason and so conclusive an argument that it ought to render lenient and well-disposed the heart of anyone who was previously most inflamed toward the Nation.

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<sup>184</sup> Deuteronomy 23:4–7.

<sup>185</sup> Numbers 20:14–21; Deuteronomy 23:8–9.

<sup>186</sup> Deuteronomy 23:8: “Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, for he is thy brother; thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian, because thou wast a stranger in his land.”

<sup>187</sup> Deuteronomy 23:9.

<sup>188</sup> See Exodus 1:22.

## CONSIDERATIONE XIV

***Benché gli Hebrei erano differenti di religione dagli altri popoli, non gli era lecito mover guerra a lor vicino per semplice causa di quella***

La comunicanza della religione è il maggior vincolo, e più tenace nodo che conserva ristretta la società humana, et insin quel etnico disse, *vita humana religione constat*, e Filone hebreo dottissimo, et eloquentissimo lasciò scritto, *nam unius Dei cultus est amoris mutuaeque benivolentiae vinculum insolubile*. Non resta perciò che appresso gli Hebrei si tiene, che quelli si trovano fuori dell'osservanza de loro riti, et assenso de loro credenze particolari, non siano però reputati affatto disciolti, e slegatti da qualunque legame de humanità, e reciproca amistà stimando essi che vi siano diversi gradi di connessione fra gli huomini, come ancora in un'istessa nazione l'obblighi di carità sono fra loro [52r] subordinati, l'amor di se stesso ottiene il primo loco, dopo v'è la congiunzione del sangue, poi l'amistà fra cittadini. E perciò credono che gli esteri, et alieni della loro religione partecipano con loro della comune humanità, che insieme li congiunge, osservando però li precetti della naturale moralità, et havendo alcuna cognitione d'una causa superiore. E per comprobare ciò ho raccolto alcuni argomenti che probabilmente lo dimostra primieramente.

Io non trovo nella Scrittura, che giamai Iddio comandasse agli Hebrei che s'impiegassero, e se affaticassero inserire nell'animo de popoli loro circonvicini, le credenze proprie per introdurvi loro riti spetiali, ma sì bene li ordinò e comandò ad ammaestrarli in alcune generali credenze come della onnipotenza, sapienza, grandezza, clemenza, e giustizia d'Iddio. Onde Hieremia al capitolo 10 admonì il popolo captivo in Babilonia che in lingua caldea dovesse advertire a quelli gentili *sic ergo dicitis eis, dii qui coelos, et terram non fecerunt perituri sunt e terra, et regionibus sub coelo isto, qui facit terram in fortitudine sua praeparat orbem in sapientia sua, et prudentia sua extendit coelos*,<sup>35</sup> e quello segue. Onde non li comette, che li debbono narrare li prodigi e miracoli occorsi nell'Egitto, non la liberatione del popolo, né la ritirata del mare con la somersione poi seguita, nemmeno il gran apparato e commotione della natura [52v] né la promulgatione della Legge, ma

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<sup>35</sup> Jeremias 10:11-12: "Sic ergo dicitis eis: Dii qui caelos et terram non fecerunt, pereant de terra et de his quae sub caelis sunt! | Qui facit terram in fortitudine sua, praeparat orbem in sapientia sua et prudentia sua extendit caelos."

## CONSIDERATION XIV

### ***Although the Jewish People Had a Religion Different from the Others, They Were not Allowed to Wage War on Their Neighbours for This Simple Reason***

The commonality of religion is the greatest bond and most tenacious tie that keeps humanity united.<sup>189</sup> Even that heathen said “*life is upheld by religion.*”<sup>190</sup> And the most learned and most eloquent Jew Philo wrote: “*The chain which binds indissolubly the goodwill which makes us one is to honour the one God.*”<sup>191</sup> This does not mean that for this reason the Jews consider all those outside of the observance of their rites or [outside of] assent to their particular beliefs thence completely free and unbound in terms of any obligation to humanity or reciprocal amity. For they believe that there are different degrees of connections among men. To the same extent, [they also believe] that within one nation the obligations of compassion must be [52r] subordinated among them: the love of self obtains first place, followed by blood ties, and lastly by the amity between citizens. They therefore believe that foreigners and aliens belonging to a different religion share the common ground of humanity that hence binds them to observing the precepts of natural morality and to having some cognition of a superior cause. To prove this, I have collected some arguments that will probably demonstrate it first-hand.

First, I do not find in the Scripture that God ever commanded the Jews to endeavour or strive to force their own beliefs onto the souls of their neighbouring peoples in order to introduce their specific rites. Yet He ordered and commanded them to instruct these people in some general beliefs such as His omnipotence, wisdom, grandeur, clemency, and justice. Hence, in chapter 10, Jeremiah advises the people captive in Babylon to inform those Gentiles in the Chaldean language: “*Thus shall ye say unto them: ‘The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth, and from under this heaven.’ He that hath made the earth by His power establishes the world by His wisdom, and stretches out the heavens by His understanding,*”<sup>192</sup> etc. Therefore, He did not want them to describe the prodigies and miracles that occurred in Egypt, nor the liberation of the people, nor the crossing of the sea with the subsequent drowning, nor the great magnificence and commotion of nature, [52v] nor the promulgation of the Law. Instead, they [i.e.,

<sup>189</sup> See Bacon, *Essays*, III, “Of Unity in Religion,” 11: “*Religion being the chiefe Band of Humane Society.*”

<sup>190</sup> According to Lattes (*Ma’amar*, 163 n. 87), Luzzatto is probably quoting Pliny, *Natural History* XIV:23,119.

<sup>191</sup> Philo, *On the Special Laws* I:52.

<sup>192</sup> Hebrew: כדנה, תאמרון להם, אלהיא, די-שמיא וארקא לא עבדו; יאבדו מארעא ומן-תחות שמיא, אלה. עושה ארץ בכוחו, מכין תבל בחכמתו; ובתבונתו, נטה שמיים.

debbano convincere la essistenza d'Iddio, e sua provvidenza dagli effetti ordinarii della sua onnipresenza dal moto de cieli, dalla productione degli enti, e dell'unanime corrispondenza di tutte le cose insieme.

Et in altro loco dice il Salmista *confitemini Domino, et invoke nomen eius, annuntiate inter gentes opera eius*,<sup>36</sup> cioè che si deve narrare, e propalare l'operationi d'Iddio, e gli effetti della sua giustitia, anzi in altro loco in quanto a riti spetiali, nel Salmo 147 *Qui annuntiat verbum suum Iacob: iustitias et iudicia sua Israel. Non fecit taliter omni nationi: et iudicia sua non manifestavit eis*.<sup>37</sup> E così concesse che la carne morticina prohibita agli Hebrei la dassero, et esponessero al pelegrino gentile, come nel Deuteronomio capitolo 14. E Malachia nel capitolo 1, *ab ortu enim solis, usque ad occasum, magnum est nomen meum in gentibus, et in omni loco sacrificatur, et offertur nomini meo oblatio munda quia magnum est nomen meum in gentibus dicit Dominus exercituum*.<sup>38</sup> volendo alludere, ch'in certo modo Iddio in quel tempo restava sodisfatto, et appagato di quella simplicità, et adombrata cognitione che teneva la gentilità d'una principal causa che assistesse al regimento del mondo. E quando Naomi fece regresso alla patria, facendo rissolutione Ruth sua nuora seguitandola di convertirsi alla religione hebrea, non solo non fu dalla suocera corroborata, e confermata in tal pensiero, ma piuttosto persuasa a ritornare nel primo [53r] stato e conditione, *cum dixit Neomi, et reversa est cognata tua ad populum suum, et ad Deos suos vade cum ea*.<sup>39</sup>

Né mai si trova che nel tempo passato fosse somerssa alcuna città de gentili per l'inosservanza de riti hebraici, e particolare incredulità, ma solo per non eseguire li impulsi naturali della ragione, e dell'umanità. Gli Pentapoli furono sovertiti, et arsi per la loro obs[c]enità, inhospitalità, et ingiustitia. In occasione del diluvio fa mentione la Scrittura solamente della corrutione carnale et iniqua rapacità, et estorsione. E gli Nineviti gentili, quando fecero penitenza non si convertirno alla religione hebrea, ma cessorno dall'estorsioni ladroneci, e fraudi, restando gentili come prima. E seppure fu ripreso

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<sup>36</sup> Psalmi 104:1: "Alleluja. Confitemini Domino, et invoke nomen ejus; annuntiate inter gentes opera ejus."

<sup>37</sup> Psalmi 147:8-9: "Qui annuntiat verbum suum Iacob, justitias et iudicia sua Israël. Non fecit taliter omni nationi et iudicia sua non manifestavit eis. Alleluja."

<sup>38</sup> Malachias 1:11: "Ab ortu enim solis usque ad occasum, magnum est nomen meum in gentibus, et in omni loco sacrificatur: et offertur nomini meo oblatio munda, quia magnum nomen meum in gentibus, dicit Dominus exercituum."

<sup>39</sup> Ruth 1:15: "Cui dixit Noëmi: En reversa est cognata tua ad populum suum, et ad deos suos, vade cum ea."

the Jews] should convince them [i.e., the heathens] of the existence of God and His providence through the ordinary manifestations of his omnipotence, the movements of the heavens, the creation of beings, and the concordant correspondence of all things together.

In another passage, the Psalmist says: “*O have faith in the Lord, call upon His name; make known His doings among the peoples,*”<sup>193</sup> meaning that they should narrate and explain the activities of God and the effects of His justice. In another section, concerning specific rites in Psalm 147 [it is said]: “*He declareth His word unto Jacob, His justice and His ordinances unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and He did not reveal them His ordinances.*”<sup>194</sup> In the same way, the Scripture concedes that dead meat, prohibited to the Jews, should be given and offered to a Gentile stranger, as [it is said] in Deuteronomy 14.<sup>195</sup> And Malachi writes in chapter 1: “*For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same My name is great among the nations; and in every place sacrifices are made and pure oblations are presented unto My name; for My name is great among the nations, saith the Lord of hosts.*”<sup>196</sup> By this, he wants to suggest that in a certain way, God remained satisfied or content at that time with the Gentiles’ acquaintance with the prime cause of the government of the world. And when Naomi returned to her country, Ruth, her daughter-in-law who was following her, resolved to convert to the Jewish religion. Not only was Ruth not supported and encouraged by her mother-in-law, but rather she persuaded her to return to her first [53r] state and condition: “*And Naomi said: ‘Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods; return thou after thy sister-in-law to her gods.’*”<sup>197</sup>

Nowhere [in the Scripture] is it written that in the past any city of the Gentiles was flooded for not observing the Jewish rites or for any specific disbelief, but only for not following the natural impulses of reason and humanity.<sup>198</sup> The Pentapolis was overturned and burnt down because of the people’s obscenity, inhospitality, and injustice. At the time of the flood, the Scripture only mentions carnal corruption and wicked rapacity and extortion.<sup>199</sup> The Gentiles of Nineveh, when they did penance, did not convert to the Jewish religion. Instead, they ceased from their larceny,<sup>200</sup> extortion, and fraud, remaining Gentiles as before.<sup>201</sup> And if any nation was

193 Psalms 105:1. Hebrew: הודו ליהוה, קראו בשמו; הודיעו בעמים, עלילותיו.

194 Psalms 147:19–20. Hebrew: מגיד דבריו ליעקוב; חוקיו ומשפטיו, לישראל לא עשה כן, לכל-גוי ומשפטים בל-ידעום: הללו-יה.

195 Deuteronomy 14:21.

196 Hebrew: כי ממזרח-שמש ועד-מבוא, גדול שמי בגויים, ובכל-מקום מוקטר מוגש לשמי, ומנחה טהורה: כי-גדול שמי בגויים, אמר יהוה.

197 Hebrew: ותאמר, הנה שבה יבמתך, אל-עמה, ואל-אלוהיה; שובי, אחרי יבמתך.

198 On the “actuality” of the biblical argument for destroying people in the name of religious rites and customs, see Veltri, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 174 ff.

199 Genesis 6:11–13.

200 Here Luzzatto uses the word “ladronecio,” taken from the Venetian dialect, meaning theft.

201 Jonah 3:6–10.



e castigato alcuna natione per il culto fu per l'iniquo uso agiontovi, come di sacrificare gli huomini, et immolare gli proprii figliuoli. Et Amos pronosticando la ruina, et eccidio di molti popoli, riducendo gli loro peccati al numero ternario, invehisce, e declama contra gli etnici damaschini, aziti, tirii, idumei, amoniti, e moabiti, de delitti, e transgressioni solamente commesse contra l'humana equità, e buona moralità ma dopo esagerando contra Giudei specifica peccati di lesa religione et omissioni de precetti della Legge. Et Iosue dopo l'acquisto di Terra Santa pose di nuovo il popolo in libertà, e proprio arbitrio di confermarsi [53v] nell'ave[n]ire, e mantenersi nella Legge mosaica, ovvero per non incorrere nelle pene in essa contenute rifiutarla, e liberarsene affatto, senza di ciò portarne alcun castigo, e come in altro loco ne son per trattare.

Onde se al popolo hebreo benché aveva di già accettata la Legge, tutta volta Iosue lo dispensava dalle pene, tanto più stimano gli Hebrei, essere assoluti gli altri popoli, che giamai s'obbligarono all'ubbidienza di lei, mentre però ch'osservano quell'a loro appartiene come ho detto. Et Ezechiel al capitolo 20 *neque cogitatio mentis vestrae fiet dicentium erimus sicut gentes, et sicut cognationes terrae, ut colamus ligna, et lapides: ego dicit Dominus Deus, quoniam in manu forti regnabo super vos*,<sup>40</sup> in tal maniera ragionò al popolo, perché molte volte si sono sottoposti volontariamente alla Legge, e stipulata promessa per se stessi e loro posterità, non essendo perciò in loro arbitrio liberarsene. Et in simil senso parlò anco il profeta Amos al capitolo 3 *Audite verbum quod locutus est Dominus super vos filii Israel, super omnem cognationem quam eduxi de terra Aegypti, dicens tantummodo cognovi ex omnibus cognationibus terrae. Idcirco visitabo super vos omnes iniquitates vestras*,<sup>41</sup> che conforme gli espositori Rabbi Salomon, e David Chimchi principalissimi appresso la natione, significa ch'havendo il popolo volontariamente ricevuto sopra di sé, e suoi posterì l'osservanza della Legge a

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<sup>40</sup> Ezechiel 20:31-33: "Neque cogitatio mentis vestrae fiet dicentium erimus sicut gentes et sicut cognationes terrae ut colamus ligna et lapides | vivo ego dicit Dominus Deus quoniam in manu forti et brachio extento et in furore effuso regnabo super vos."

<sup>41</sup> Amos 3:1-2: "Audite verbum quod locutus est Dominus super vos filii Israhel super omni cognatione quam eduxi de terra Aegypti dicens | tantummodo vos cognovi ex omnibus cognationibus terrae idcirco visitabo super vos omnes iniquitates vestrae."

ever rebuked and castigated for its cult, it was for iniquities added to it [i.e., this cult] such as sacrificing humans and burning their own sons. Amos, predicting the ruin and destruction of many peoples, reduced their sins to three. Accordingly, he inveighed and declaimed against the heathens of Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Idumea, Amon, and Moab and accused them of crimes and transgressions committed against human equity and morality.<sup>202</sup> Afterwards, however, with some exaggeration against the Jews,<sup>203</sup> he became very specific and referred explicitly to injuries to religion and neglect of the precepts of the Mosaic Law.<sup>204</sup> Joshua, after the acquisition of the Holy Land, returned to the people the free choice to confirm their allegiance to Mosaic Law [53v] in the future and to stay within its bonds or to reject it in order to avoid the penalties it inflicts. As I will explain elsewhere, he allowed them to be entirely set free from it, without incurring any punishment.<sup>205</sup>

Therefore, if Joshua absolved the Jewish people from the penalty, although they had already accepted the Law, the Jews would have all the more reason to consider other people who had never committed themselves to obeying the Law to be absolved. Meanwhile, they had to observe that which pertains to them, as I have said. Ezekiel says in chapter 20: *“And that which cometh into your mind shall not be of those who say: We will be as the nations, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone. I, saith the Lord God, since will be king over you with a mighty hand.”*<sup>206</sup> He spoke to the people in such a manner because they had often voluntarily submitted themselves to the Law and to the promise they had made for themselves and their descendants. Hence, it was not in their power to free themselves from it. And in a similar sense, the prophet Amos spoke in chapter 3: *“Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken upon you, O children of Israel, upon the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt, saying: You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities.”*<sup>207</sup> According to the commentators Rabbi Solomon<sup>208</sup> and David Kimḥi,<sup>209</sup> who are among the most outstanding commentators on the Law, this means that the people voluntarily accepted the observance of the Law for themselves and their descendants at the

**202** Amos 1:3–5 (Damascus), 6–7 (Gaza), 9–10 (Tyre), 11 (Idumea), 13–15 (Ammon), 2:1–3 (Moab).

**203** Luzzatto is conscious of the Christian traditions against the Jews, which often emphasise that the prophets condemned them because of their sins against the Law. Therefore, he is speaking of the exaggerations made by the prophet Amos.

**204** Amos 2:6 ff.

**205** See Joshua 24:14–28.

**206** Hebrew: *אם-אידרש, לכם. והעולה, על-רוחכם--היה, לא תהיה: אשר אתם אומרים, נהיה כגויים* כמשפחות הארצות--לשרת, עץ ואבן. חי-אני, נאום אדוניי יהוה: אם-לא ביד חזקה ובזרוע נטויה, ובחמה שפוכה--אמלוך עליכם.

**207** Hebrew: *דיבר יהוה עליכם--בני ישראל: על כל-המשפחה, אשר שמעו את-הדבר הזה, אשר העליתי: מארץ מצריים לאמור. רק אתכם ידעתי, מכול משפחות האדמה; על-כן אפקוד עליכם, את כל-עוונותיכם.*

**208** See glossary.

**209** See glossary.

tempo di Moisè, et [54r] Io|suè, perciò Iddio, n'era particolar esatore, et accurato riscuotitore delle pene che per le delinquenze sue era debitore, quello che non eseguiva con gli altri popoli gentili, et etnici, essendo con essi connivente et indulgente, perch'è ragionevole conforme la regola de legisti, *secundum naturam est commoda cuiuscumque rei cum sequi, quem sequuntur incommoda*.

E così per il converso Hitro gentile essendo venuto a visitar suo genero Moisè nel deserto dopo la liberatione del popolo e miracoli seguiti in Egitto, disse conforme il testo hebraico, *Nunc cognovi maiorem esse Dominum omnibus Diis*<sup>42</sup>, confessò la maggioranza, ma non negò assolutamente la essistenza degli altri minori sue machinate deità, conforme alli Romani che si fingevano certa loro gerarchia di maggiori, e minori dei. Ma il Salmista con più sensata e corretta maniera disse, *magnus est Dominus super omnes Deos*,<sup>43</sup> altro è il dire l'imperatore è maggiore di qualunque re, ovvero che possiede sopra essi superiorità. E Naaman nel convertirsi che fece a Iddio per la rissanatione della sua infettione, procurò dal profeta certa dispensatione che li fusse lecito essendo in compagnia del re inginocchiarsi agli idoli, patteggiando una tal transatione in fatto de religione, che non sarebbe stato concesso all'Hebreo di già obligato di puntuale osservatione a tutti li riti della Legge.

Anzi per sigillare questo proposito voglio [54v] addurre un loco del Deuteronomio capitolo 33 che espressamente dimostra ch'Iddio sebbene favori il popolo hebreo, con tutto ciò nell'istesso tempo della promulgatione della Legge, non odiava gli altri popoli a quali non fu comunicata, ma tuttavia gli amava, ove nell'ultima benedictione di Moisè dopo aver descritto tal legislatione, soggiunge conforme l'hebraico, approbato dal Burgensis, *Etiam dilexit populos, omnes sancti eius in manibus tuis, et ipsi appropinquantur pedibus tuis, legem praecepit nobis Moyses, etc.*<sup>44</sup> intendendo per *populos* gli gentili, privi della Legge Mosaica che narrò nel verso antecedente esser stata comunicata all'hebreo. Segue la Scrittura dicendo è ben vero nonostante tal amore,

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<sup>42</sup> Exodus 18:11: "Nunc cognovi, quia magnus Dominus super omnes deos: eo quod superbe egerint contra illos."

<sup>43</sup> Psalmi 94:3: "Quoniam Deus magnus Dominus, et rex magnus super omnes deos."

<sup>44</sup> Deuteronomium 33: 3-4: "Dilexit populos omnes sancti in manu illius sunt: et qui adpropinquant pedibus ejus accipient, de doctrina illius. Legem praecepit nobis Moyses."

time of Moses and [54r] Joshua.<sup>210</sup> Therefore, God is the special exacter of it and the careful collector of the penalties they owed Him due to their sins. He did not apply this to other Gentile and heathen peoples. Instead, He was acquiescent and indulgent with them, because it is reasonable according to the rule of the legislators: “*It is natural that he who bears the charge of a thing should receive the advantage.*”<sup>211</sup>

Thus, in the converse manner, when Jethro, who was a Gentile, came to visit his son-in-law Moses in the desert after the liberation of the people and the miracles that occurred in Egypt, he said, according to the Hebrew text: “*Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods.*”<sup>212</sup> He acknowledged the superiority of God, but did not absolutely deny the existence of lesser and imagined gods, similarly to the Romans who imagined a hierarchy of greater and lesser gods as if they were real. However, the Psalmist, in a more sensible and correct manner, said: “*The Lord is a great God above all gods.*”<sup>213</sup> To say that the emperor is greater than any other king is different to [saying] that he possesses superiority over them. Naaman, after his conversion to God because his disease had been cured, procured from the Prophet certain dispensations, namely the permission to kneel to the idols while he was in the company of the king.<sup>214</sup> In fact, [he succeeded] in bargaining for this compromise in matters of religion that would not be granted to any Jew already bound to the exact observance of all the rites of the Law.

Moreover, to close this investigation I wish [54v] to cite a passage from Deuteronomy chapter 33. It clearly demonstrates that although God favoured the Jewish people, nevertheless at the time of the promulgation of the Law, He did not shun the other peoples to whom it was not communicated.<sup>215</sup> On the contrary, He loved them. In the last blessing of Moses, after the description of the Law, he added, according to the Hebrew, approved by Burgensis:<sup>216</sup> “*Yes, He loveth the peoples, all His holy ones – they are in Thy hand; and they sit down at Thy feet. Moses commanded us a Law etc.*”<sup>217</sup> By *peoples*, he is referring to the Gentiles outside of the Mosaic Law, which he had mentioned in the previous verse as it was communicated to the Jews. The Scripture then continues, stating that in truth, notwithstanding the love

210 For the sources of Rashi and Kimḥi, see Lattes, *Ma’amar*, 163 n. 97.

211 Julius Paulus, *Digesta* L:17,10: “*Secundum naturam est commoda cuiusque rei unum sequi, quem sequentur incommoda.*”

212 Hebrew: עתה ידעתי, כי גדול יהוה מכל האלוהים.

213 Psalms 95:3. Hebrew: על-כל אלוהים; ומלך גדול, כי אל גדול יהוה; ומלך גדול, על-כל אלוהים.

214 2 Kings 5:17–18.

215 Luzzatto is not completely right, because Midrashic traditions relate that the Torah was communicated to the seventy-two people of the world and they refused it. See Giuseppe Veltri, *Libraries, Translations, and “Canonic” Texts: The Septuagint, Aquila and Ben Sira in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 96 for the sources.

216 Accordingly, see Lattes, *Ma’amar*, 100–101 n. 102. See glossary.

217 Hebrew: אף חובב עמים, כל-קדושי בידך; והם תוכו לרגלך, יישא מדברותיך. תורה ציווה-לנו, משה.

che portò a popoli gentili, tuttavia li santi del popolo hebraico gli erano più prossimi e favoriti, usando la metafora delle mani, come il Salmista volendo dinotare la protezione spetiale ch'Iddio haveva della sua anima e spirito, disse *in manum tuam deponam spiritum meum*<sup>45</sup> riferendosi il relativo di (*eius*) al popolo hebraico nel verso antecedente espresso. E così conforme tal sentimento corrisponde il subseguente con dire *legem praecipit nobis Moyses*, quasi dicesse l'amore e carità d'Iddio si estende universalmente sopra tutti gli huomini, ma il favore della Legge fu a quelli tempi concesso solo al popolo hebreo. E questa è la più facile, e meno estorta esposizione che giammai da comentatori hebrei sia stata trovata, essendo il [55r] lo/co della Scrittura molto abstruso e recondito.

Queste sono ragioni, et argomenti cavati dall'interno della Sacra Scrittura a quali devono cedere qualunque autorità di rabini, e dottori che in contrario tenissero, che non credo vi sia, e seppure vi fosse haranno trattato di nationi infette de vitii sceleratenze simili a Cananei Amalechiti iniqui con gli huomini, et impii verso Iddio., Et ognuno ha parlato in tal proposito conforme alla qualità de suoi tempi, ma non con spirito profetico per l'universale infinito avvenire, ch'è propria cognitione d'Iddio.

Ma s'alcuno ricercasse all'hebreo qual fosse la cagione ch'Iddio non si curò di far propagare anticamente la sua religione, et osservanza di riti nella gentilità, risponderebbe che ciò sta involto nelli profondi secreti della Divinità, siccome non si può comprendere n'anco qual sia stato la cagione che già pochi mille anni solamente hebbe principio il mondo e che tanto ritardasse Iddio diffondere la sua benignità alle future creature, com'anco non si può arrivar a sapere perché creò tal numero d'huomini, e tale d'angioli, ma solo in generale si può dire che così compiva all'ornamento del mondo.

E se agli arcani di Sua Divina Maestà può giunger alcuna humana ragione si potrebbe ancor replicare conforme agli Hebrei ch'Iddio volendo conservar la religione fra loro, non curò che agli confinanti gentili si dilatasse il [55v] rito hebraico. E la ragione di ciò fu, che siccome l'antiperistasi rinforza la virtù alle cose naturali, e l'invigorisce, et il freddo circondando il caldo l'accresce virtù, tanto che li Stoici dissero che l'aere freddo ch'assale repentinamente il novello parto riconcentrandoli il calore lo fa divenire vivo, così ancor il soprastar del nemico, et il terrore aguerisce li popoli, e l'infonde spiriti militari, nell'istesso modo la repugnanza della religione de circonvicini rendeva più vivo il popolo fedele, nella propria credenza, e più militante alla difesa de suoi patrii riti.

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45 Psalmi 31:6: "In manus tuas commendo spiritum meum."

he had for the Gentile people, nevertheless the holy ones of the Jewish people were nearer to him and more favoured. In the same way, the Psalmist uses the metaphor of hands, wishing to specify the special protection devised by God for his soul and spirit, saying: “*Into Thy hand I commit my spirit.*”<sup>218</sup> He uses the relative pronoun “his” to denote the Jewish people mentioned in the previous verse. And consistently with this sentiment, the subsequent verse logically proceeds by saying “*Moses commanded us a Law,*” as if suggesting that the love and compassion of God extended universally to all mankind. But the favour of the Law was at that time granted only to the Jewish people. This is the easiest and least distorted exposition that has ever been found by Jewish commentators, for the [55r] passage in the Scripture is very enigmatic and hidden.

These are the reasons and arguments extracted from the Sacred Scripture to which any authorities such as rabbis and sages who hold otherwise are to yield, although I do not think there are any. And if there were, they would have dealt with the nations corrupted by vices and wickedness similar to the Amalekite Canaanites, wicked towards men and impious towards God. Each of them argued according to the conditions of his time, but none spoke with a prophetic spirit that is universally and eternally valid, for this special knowledge is God’s prerogative.

However, should anyone ask a Jew why God did not care to have his religion and the observance of his rites propagated among the Gentiles in antiquity, he would respond that such information remains enveloped in the profound secrets of the divinity. In the same way, one cannot comprehend why the world began only a few thousand years ago, and that God held back the diffusion of his benignity to His future creatures for so long. One is also at a loss as to why He created such a vast number of men and so many angels. It is only possible to say in general that this must have been the most suitable means for the ornamentation of the world.

If any human reason could access the secrets of His Divine Majesty, the Jews would reply that God, wanting to preserve religion among them, did not wish their [55v] rites to spread to the neighbouring Gentiles, a possible reason for this being a similar thing to antiperistasis.<sup>219</sup> The antiperistatic motion reinforces the qualities of natural things and strengthens them. The cold surrounding the hot increases its heat. This led the Stoics to believe that the cold air suddenly assailing a new-born infant breathes life into it by summoning up heat within it. So too terror and the threat of the enemy make people fierce and infuse them with military spirit. In the same way, the repugnance towards religion professed by the surrounding neighbours rendered the faithful people more fervent in their own beliefs and more militant in the defence of their native rites.

<sup>218</sup> Psalms 31:6. Hebrew: אֶפְקִיד רוּחִי בִידְךָ.

<sup>219</sup> For the concept of antiperistasis in Luzzatto, see Veltri, “Economic and Social Arguments.”

Dal discorso fatto si tiene documento fermo, e certa assertione, che all'Hebreo non sia lecito usare alcun atto d'inhumanità, et offensione verso chi sia ch'havesse diverso rito, e credenza, purché quel tale osservasse gli precetti morali, et anche non fusse infetto d'alcun vizio enorme, essendo informato dell'omnipotenza, bontà, scientia, provvidenza d'una causa superiore che regge, e modera il tutto.

Ma s'alcuno di nuovo obietasse circa l'usura prohibita esigerla dall'Hebreo, ma non dall'alieno dal quale è concesso e permesso riceverla, rispondo che in ciò non si allontanano gli Hebrei dalla comune opinione, che sia piuttosto tolleranza, che concessione, non volendo io addurre che appresso li Romani erano concesse alcune usure, ché non intendo diffendere quello non è approbato dall'[56r] universale, anzi che oltra di ciò dico esser cosa indubitata, che anticamente mentre che gli Hebrei erano meglio agiati, fu da dottori prohibito essercitare l'usura anco con qualsivoglia che era escluso dalla loro religione, come espressamente si legge nella glossa esponente il Salmo che principia, *Quis ascendet in monte Domini*.<sup>46</sup>

E questo divieto hebbe alcuni motivi molti ragionevoli: primo, che non si sa esatamente nella Scrittura quali siano appellati propriamente fratelli, et alieni, essendo sotto il nome di fratelli più d'una volta nominati gli Edumei; secondo, per esser l'usura essercitata con l'Hebreo, gravissimo peccato, e credono ch'in tale prava contrattatione vi concorrono nella colpa il mutuante, et il mutuario, il fideiussore, il notaio, e gli testimonii, havendo anco per prohibito il lucro cessante, et il danno emergente. Perciò divietarno ch'affatto tal essercitio fosse interdetto d'usarlo con qual si sia persona acciocché per la giocondità di tal guadagno non si assuefacessero commetterlo anco con gli Hebrei; terzo, per ovviare gli pretesti, e paliamenti usuratici, che sotto nome, e per mezzo d'alieni si poteva illicitamente essercitare con gli istessi Hebrei;

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<sup>46</sup> Psalmi 23:3: "Quis ascendet in montem Domini?"

From the argument above, one obtains reliable evidence and indubitable statements to the effect that it is not permitted for a Jew to undertake any act of inhumanity or offence against anyone who has a different rite or belief, provided that such persons observe the moral precepts and are not infected with any vices, but are acquainted with the omnipotence, goodness, knowledge, and providence of a superior cause that rules and governs all.<sup>220</sup>

But if anyone should object once more to the usury that it is prohibited to exact from the Jews but not from foreigners, I answer that in this the Jews do not detach themselves from public or common opinion. Usury is tolerated rather than permitted.<sup>221</sup> I do not want to suggest that usury was permitted to any extent among the Romans, since I do not want to advocate that which is not [56r] universally approved. In addition to this, I state that it is an undoubted fact that in former times, when the Jews were better off, the practice of usury with any outsider from their religion was prohibited by the sages. This was explicitly written in the commentary expounding the Psalm that begins “*Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord.*”<sup>222</sup>

This prohibition had several highly reasonable motives. First, one does not exactly know who, according to the Scripture, must properly be called brother and who is regarded as alien. In fact, more than once the Edomites are included in the category of brothers.<sup>223</sup> Second, usury against fellow Jews is the most despicable sin, especially when during such a wicked bargain the lender, borrower, guarantor, notary, and witnesses are all accountable and guilty,<sup>224</sup> for they have all been forbidden the “ceasing of the gain,” and the “emerging damage.”<sup>225</sup> Accordingly, they [i.e., the Jewish sages] issued a ban against [engaging in] the practice with anyone. By doing so, they wanted to avoid a situation in which the Jews would extend this practice to their brothers after becoming used to effortless gain.<sup>226</sup> Third, this prohibition served to avoid the stratagems and manoeuvres of the usurers, such as using foreigners’ names or their mediation in order to illicitly exercise usury with Jews.

<sup>220</sup> Possibly a reference to the Noachid principles, see Genesis 9.

<sup>221</sup> See above 42r–v. See also Veltri, “Economic and Social Arguments.”

<sup>222</sup> Psalms 24:3. However, Luzzatto probably meant Psalm 15, which commences as follows – “Lord, who shall sojourn in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell upon Thy holy mountain?” – and whose fifth verse reads “He that putteth not out his money on interest.”

<sup>223</sup> See 50v, where Luzzatto explains that Jacob and Esau (the father of the Edomites) were brothers. Therefore, there is consanguinity between the Israelites and Edomites. See also Deuteronomy 23:8.

<sup>224</sup> On this subject, see Talmud Bavli, Bava Metzia 75b, and also Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, “Sefer Mishpatim,” Halakhot malveh we-loweh, chapter 4.

<sup>225</sup> *Lucrum cessans*: literally, “the ceasing of the gain.” This is an economic damage that follows a pecuniary loss, preventing the injured party from increasing his/her patrimony with the gain he/she would have had if the pecuniary loss had never occurred. *Damnum emergens*: literally “the emerging damage,” i.e., the decrease of the patrimony occurring after a pecuniary loss.

<sup>226</sup> Mishnah, Bava Metzia 5:11, and its elucidation in the Babylonian Talmud.



quarto, dicono gli istessi dottori non esser decente tal professione, essendo l'usuraio astratto dal commertio degli huomini, et alieno dal proffitto [56v] della repubblica. Ma dopo che agli Hebrei fu vietato da precipi il possesso de beni stabili, l'essercitii d'alcune professioni più principali, et altr'industrie della vita civile, fu da dottori per sovvenire agli urgenti bisogni della natione in procacciarsi il vitto rilasciato il rigore di tale prohibitione, e rimesso il tutto all'antica permissione della Legge mosaica, onde resta soddisfatta e svanita a mio credere questa lamentevole declamatione verso la natione.

Né posso tralasciare di non comemorare in tal proposito un costume com'imprevaricabile rito con gran rigore osservato dagli Hebrei di giamai non intramettersi, e fraporsi in materia di stato pergiuditiale a precipi sotto li quali ricontano altri Hebrei, stimando esser quelli, come loro ostaggi, tanto è grande la corrispondenza di carità fra essi, che dall'uniformità della lor religione procede. E gl'illustrissimi et eccellentissimi Signori Baili<sup>47</sup> destinati alla porta del Signore Gran Turcho, hanno molte volte esperimentato che nelli loro viaggi per il territorio turchesco a guisa de angioli di pace sono dalla natione ricevuti, e conforme s'estende l'estremo delle loro forze regalati. E nell'istessa città de Costantinopoli li vien prestato dagli Hebrei riverente ossequio, come se sudditi nativi li fossero, il tutto derrivando sì per la soggettione abituata nell'animo degli Hebrei di riverire li [57r] perso|nagi grandi, com'anco per ricompensare in parte gli buoni trattamenti, che sono usati alla loro natione in la città ricovrante. E siccome non hanno per preceto gli Hebrei, come ho detto il dilatare la loro religione, così ancora non hanno alcun pensiero giamai di tentare alcuna novità di sollevare in universale il stato della loro gente, credendo essi ch'ogni mutatione segnalata che li sia per occorrere, deve dipendere da causa superiore, e non da humani tentativi.

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<sup>47</sup> Si tratta di un titolo attribuito a un pubblico ufficiale, solitamente usato per designare governatori di province occidentali o di grandi circoscrizioni. Equivale al titolo di eccellenza per consoli ed ambasciatori.

Fourth, the same sages say that this profession is not decent, the usurer being separated from the commerce of men and cut off from the profit [56v] of the Republic. Nevertheless, when the possession of real estate, the exercise of any of the major professions, and the other industries of civil life were forbidden to the Jews by the princes, the sages moderated the rigour of this prohibition in order to meet the urgent needs of the nation in supplying [them with] food. Accordingly, it all goes back to the old Mosaic Law. And I believe that these arguments are an answer to those complaints and accusations against the Nation, satisfying enough to make them vanish.

Furthermore, I should not omit to mention a custom observed with great rigour as an unfringeable rite by the Jews: that is, never to meddle or interfere in political matters that could be prejudicial to a ruler under whom other Jews find shelter. For the Jews consider their brothers as if they were the prince's hostages,<sup>227</sup> so great is the mutual compassion among them that results from the uniformity of their religion. And the illustrious and most excellent [Venetian] ambassadors assigned to the Great Sultan have experienced many times that in their voyages through Turkish territory, they are received as angels of peace by the Nation who treat them as well as the utmost possibilities allowed them.<sup>228</sup> Furthermore, in the city of Constantinople, the Nation rendered them reverent obedience as if they were native subjects. All this derives both from the habitual humility of the Jews to honour [57r] prominent persons and from the wish to partially recompense the good treatment granted to their Nation in the city that shelters them. And while the Jews do not follow the precept of spreading their religion, they also never had any thought of attempting to improve the general status of their people. In fact, they believe that every change that will occur to them must depend on a superior cause and not on human endeavour.<sup>229</sup>

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**227** On this political condition, see Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, "Servants of the Kings Not Servants of the Servants: Some Aspects of the Political History of the Jews," in *The Faith of Fallen Jews: Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi and the Writing of Jewish History*, ed. David N. Myers and Alexander Kaye (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2014), 245–76.

**228** See, for example, Pietro Foscarini, *Ambasciata Straordinaria di Costantinopoli* (Rome: Biblioteca Italiana, 2005); M. Barbaro and A. Tiepolo, *Dell'audientia data da Selim Imperatore de Turchi all'Ambasciatore et Baili de Venetiani in Costantinopoli (1573)* (Venezia: Biblioteca del Museo Correr, mss Codex Cicogna 3723 [no. 6]), 33–35.

**229** Bernard Septimus, "Biblical Religion and Political Rationality in Simone Luzzatto, Maimonides and Spinoza," in *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, 399–485.

Nell'esilio di Castiglia, et altri regni a lei adiacenti a tempi del Re Ferdinando, e Regina Isabella si trovarono uniti insieme, vicino al numero di mezzo milione d'anime, che gli esclusi, che non si volsero convertire alla religione christiana, furono trecento mila, come narra Isach Abravanello dottissimo autore, che vi si trovò come capo, fra quali vi furono huomini di gran spirito, e consiglieri di Stato, come fu l'istesso Abravanello. Ma non si trovò in tanto numero, alcuno che ardì di proporre partito risoluto per sollevarsi da quel miserabile esilio. Ma si dispersero, e distrassero per tutto il mondo, segno evidente, che gli hodierni instituti degli Hebrei, e loro rimessi costumi gl'inchinano alla soggettione, et ossequio de loro Principi.

During their exile from Castile and other adjacent kingdoms at the time of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella,<sup>230</sup> close to half a million souls were found united together. According to the most learned author, Isaac Abrabanel,<sup>231</sup> who was their leader, up to three hundred thousand individuals were banished because of their refusal to convert to the Christian religion. Among them there were men of great wit as well as counsellors of state, as was Abrabanel himself. But among such a great number of people, none was to be found who dared to rebel against remaining in that miserable exile. On the contrary, they dispersed and spread out all over the world,<sup>232</sup> an evident sign that the present institutions of the Jews and their submissive customs incline them to subjection and obedience to their ruler.

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**230** See consideration XI, 39v.

**231** See glossary.

**232** In fact, almost all of them stayed in the Mediterranean area, primarily going to Portugal, the Ottoman Empire, North Africa, and, to a much lesser extent, the Italian peninsula.

## CONSIDERATIONE XV

### ***Circa alcune opposizioni fatte da Cornelio Tacito contra l'antico popolo hebreo, e loro risoluzione***

[57v] Cornelio Tacito famoso historico romano, meritò per la sua dottrina, et esperienza delle cose politiche esser annoverato fra primi maestri del governo civile, alla sua eloquenza vivace, e virile più acenante ch'espessiva, solertia nel penetrare gli arcani de' precipi, gravità de' sentenze, acrimonia nel censurare le prave attioni, maturità di giuditio circa gli avvenimenti humani, et altre egregie virtù ch'arrecò alle sue Historie, professò inserirvi anco incorrotta verità, spirito et vita de' racconti, e narrationi. Tuttavia nel riferire l'origine e costumi degli Hebrei tralignò e si rese diverso di se stesso, per le mendacità che vi mescolò, confermando quell'aurea sentenza del nostro Filone, ch'in ragionare della religione disse *imbuta sua cuique optima videtur, et quae non ratione, sed affectu diiudicatur a singulis*. E quell'animo ingenuo che non si lasciò infestare d'alcuna passione nel raccontare gli fatti de' suoi, nel narrare gli costumi e riti degli Hebrei tanto fu poi sconvolto dall'odio che portava alla loro religione, e per il disprezzo della nazione riuscì oltra modo trascurato [58r] nell'indalgar la vera origine, et avvenimenti.

Et io mi son sempre maravigliato, che sì grave autore tant'oltre s'inganasse, poichè a suoi tempi si trovavano tradotti dalli Settanta Vecchi li Libri Sacri, e già le compositioni di Filone, e Gioseffo furono publicate, et a semplice senatore romano era scusabile, che per l'occupationi dell'uso delle proprie cose gl'impediva la peritia delle straniere, ma ad historico che professa l'instruire altrui, è indecente in qualunque parte non esser limato, e ben raguagliato.

E giudicando io che questo suo racconto, e giuditio, circa l'origine e riti della nazione, prestandoli fede, non poco detrimento potesse apportare a tutti gli credenti della Sacra Scrittura, et esser scoglio di naufragio agli spiriti deboli nella fede, ho

## CONSIDERATION XV

### ***Considering Various Objections Brought forward by Cornelius Tacitus against the Ancient Jewish People, and Their Resolution***

[57v] The famous Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus deserves to be counted among the earliest masters of civil government for his teachings on and experience in politics. [He has a] lively and energetic eloquence, in which he is more inclined to allusions than to concise statements, zeal in penetrating the secrets of princes, gravity of sentences, acrimony in censuring depraved actions, maturity of judgment regarding human events, and other distinguished virtues that entered into his *Histories*. In addition to this, he sought after an uncorrupted truth, which is the spirit and life of stories and storytelling. However, when referring to the origins and customs of the Jews, he failed in this task, deviating from his usual self, because of the mendaciousness with which he mixed [his narration], thus confirming that golden judgment of our Philo, who, when discussing religion, stated: “*Every people is convinced of the excellence of its own institutions..., for they judge them not so much by their reasoning as by the affection which they feel for them.*”<sup>233</sup> This ingenuous soul did not contaminate his narration of the facts about his fellows [Romans] with any passion whatsoever. Yet in the narration of the customs and rites of the Jews, he was so overcome with hatred for the Jewish religion and contempt for the Jewish Nation that he was eventually excessively neglectful [58r] in investigating their true origins and events from their history.

I have always marvelled at how such a serious author could go so wrong, since he had access to translations of the sacred books provided by the seventy elders,<sup>234</sup> as well as the compositions of Philo and Josephus that had already been published. A simple Roman senator could have been excused for not knowing these books: being fully preoccupied with Roman affairs, he might be impeded in his assessment of foreigners. To the historian responsible for the instruction of others, it is indecent not to be well and carefully informed about every aspect.

I thus believe Tacitus’s story and his judgment regarding the origins and rites of the Jewish Nation to have been quite detrimental to all believers of the Holy Scripture – like a rock that will shipwreck weak spirits among the believers. I therefore

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<sup>233</sup> Philo, *On the Embassy to Gaius* XXXVI:277.

<sup>234</sup> The Septuagint.

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**Note:** On this text, see Abraham Melamed, “Simone Luzzatto on Tacitus. Apologetica and Ragione di Stato,” in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 2:143–70; Septimus, “Biblical Religion and Political Rationality.”

stimato esser opera d'alcun pregio esaminare le sue parole, scoprire gli mendacii, e confutare l'imposture in tal proposito da lui finte, over'almeno amplificate. Non discorrerò circa quello dice dell'origine degli Hebrei, essendo indegno dopo ch'abbiamo il vero filo e serie della Sacra Scrittura il dimorarvi sopra in convincerlo, ma mi dilatarò circa le calunnie, et altr'inadvertenze da lui commesse.

Primo improprio fu l'impostura del capo asinino consacrato nel penetrale del sacro Tempio di Hierusalem, onde dice *effigiem animalis, quo [58v] mon/strante errorem sitimque depulerant, penetrati sacravere*, cioè che vagando il popolo hebreo nel deserto loco privo d'acque, e perciò infestato dalla sete, incontrandosi in un gregie d'asini selvaggi congieturando perciò Moisè, che vi fosse vicino alcuna fonte, lo seguì tanto che ritrovò l'acque tanto bramate, ristorandosi 'l popolo della sete che pativa, e per memoria di tanto opportuno avvenimento, consacrò l'effigie overo teschio di quegli animali, onde fu conservato per corso di tempo nel penetrale del Tempio. Il qual mendacio fu già confutato da molti dottori, et in particolare da Ter-tuliano, e la Scrittura non havendo fatto mentione di tal caso, reclama esser machinata menzogna.

Ma tuttavia molte fiato mi son posto a vaticinare, onde prese origine quest'impostura, poichè ogni famosa, e receputa bugia tiene alcuna radice unita con la verità, dalla quale a guisa di terreno ne prende origine, et alimento, et anco gli mon-struosi, e non vivaci parti tragono principio sovente da parenti non diffetosi<sup>48</sup>. E siccome l'ombra benchè sia mera, e vana privatione, tuttavia li contorni che la configurano dipendono da corpi solidi, e reali, così la bugia d'alcuna cosa subsistente scaturisce, e deriva, et havend'io considerato che l'autore non afferma

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<sup>48</sup> Diffetosi, ovvero "difettosi," in questo contesto Luzzatto si riferisce a genitori che hanno qualche difetto di conformazione fisica, oppure qualche disfunzione degli organi.

deem it a work of some value to examine his words, to uncover his mendaciousness, and to make an effort to refute the falsehoods he purports and exaggerates in his work. I will not discuss what he says regarding the origins of the Jews. In fact, it does not seem worth lingering on this subject or trying to make it persuasive, since we have the true thread and sequence [of facts] in Holy Scripture. Instead, I will discuss the slanders and other oversights that Tacitus makes.

The first slander concerns the donkey's head supposedly consecrated in the inner chambers of the Holy Temple of Jerusalem.<sup>235</sup> As he says: "*They dedicated, in a shrine, a statue of that creature whose [58v] guidance enabled them to put an end to their wandering and thirst.*"<sup>236</sup> That is, [he claims that] when the Jews were wandering the desert, a place deprived of water and therefore dominated by thirst, they eventually came upon a flock of wild donkeys. From this, Moses inferred that a spring must be near. Thus he followed [the flock] until he discovered the desired water. The water restored the people and quenched their thirst. As a consequence, and to remember such a propitious event, they consecrated an effigy or skull of [one of] these animals, which was ultimately preserved in the inner chambers of the Temple. Tacitus's lies about these events have already been identified by a number of sages, in particular by Tertullian.<sup>237</sup> Furthermore, the Scripture makes no mention of this event, which shows that the story is untrue.

However, I have many times devoted energy to guessing where such an imposture originated, since every renowned and generally accepted lie holds some seed of truth from which it originates and grows. Even monstrous and aborted offspring sometimes originate from flawless parents. The lie can be compared to the shadow that, despite being made of mere vain privation, nonetheless possesses borders that circumscribe it and that depend on solid and real bodies. In the same way, a lie springs and derives from a substratum.<sup>238</sup> Noting that the author does not claim

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**235** For the cult of the donkey, see Elias Bickerman, "Ritualmord und Eselskult. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte antiker Publizistik," *Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 71 (1927): heft 4, 171–87, and heft 5, 255–64. For the donkey in Jewish culture, see Yaacov Shavit, *Ḥamoriyut – Masa' be-'iqvot ha-ḥamor – Mitologyah, alegoryah, simliyyut we-clishe'ah* [*The Donkey: a Cultural History. A Journey through Myth, Allegory, Symbol, and Cliché*] (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2014) [in Hebrew].

**236** Tacitus, *Histories* V:4.

**237** Tertullian (*Apology* XVI) sends the reader back to Tacitus's *Histories* V. See also Josephus's arguments against this slander in his *Againts Apion* II:79–82.

**238** The whole passage is built on Aristotelian terminology. For "privation," see Aristotle, *Categories* § 10 (12a26–31): "*Privation and possession are spoken of in connexion with the same thing, for example sight and blindness in connexion with the eye. To generalize, each of them is spoken of in connection with whatever the possession naturally occurs in. We say that anything capable of receiving a possession is deprived of it when it is entirely absent from that which naturally has it, at the time when it is natural for it to have it.*" For "substratum" see Aristotle, *Physics* I:9 (192a31–33): "*For my definition of matter is just this – the primary substratum of each thing, from which it comes to be, and which persists in the result, not accidentally.*"



ch'adorassero gli Hebrei quella forma asinina, com'alcuni l'intesero, et in che maniera poteva egli ciò asserire [59r]<sup>49</sup> se lui stesso narra, che gli Hebrei *mente sola unumque numen intellegunt*, e quello segue, e nel libro secondo dell'*Historia*, discorrendo del famoso monte Carmelo posto nella Giudea, dice *nec simulacrum Deo aut templum, sic tradidere maiores, ara tantum et reverentiam*, tanto lontano dunque, ch'adorassero la testa d'un asino in fra tutti gli animali il più sozzo e stupido? Ma quello mi suggerisce il mio pensiero lo dirò congetturando solamente, senz'alcuna contumacia di pertinacemente affermarlo.

Ho osservato nella Sacra Scrittura, che molte cose quali furono mezzi, et adminicoli de miracoli, ovvero di segnalare vittorie per memorie de favori divini, furono consacrati a lochi sacri. Il vaso della manna, la verga d'Aron che fiori mando[r]le, furono per divin precetto posti nel sacrario, e così anco fu conservato per lungo tempo il serpente di rame fatto a tempo di Moisè, che con il riguardar lo rissanava gli amorsicati da venenosi serpi, che continuò insino al tempo d'Ezechia, onde già per l'abuso del popolo si convertì in abominabile idolatria, e le 12 pietre, che furno cavate dall'alveo del Giordano per memoria della mirabile divisione delle sue acque, Giosuè 4. Nell'istesso modo parimente la spada con la quale fu reciso il capo di Golia dal garzonetto David fu posta nel sacrario appresso gli habiti sacerdotali del maggior sacerdote, e fu poi da sacerdoti concessa [59v] all'istesso David, perciò anco furono da Saul rigorosamente trucidati.

Così ancora potrebbe essere ch'havendo Sanson gagliardissimo huomo, et egregio capitano degli Hebrei sconfitto mille filistei con una mascella d'asino, et havendo Sansone grandissima sete, orando a Dio, da quella mascella ne scaturì abbondantissima acqua, onde si rihebbe, e ristaurò, come nel libro de Giudici, capitolo 19 si lege<sup>50</sup>. In comemorazione de sì valorosa attione fu posta l'effigie d'un teschio d'asino, con il scaturimento dell'acqua in alcun loco del Tempio, essendo il tutto avvenuto miracolosamente, e non per

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<sup>49</sup> La pagina 59 è assente, al suo posto compare due volte pagina 60. Si tratta di un errore di paginazione che non incide sul senso.

<sup>50</sup> Judicum 15:19.

that the Jews worshipped that asinine form, as some have hastened to do, I wondered how he could assert this, [59r] since he himself writes that the Jews “*conceive of one god only, and that with the mind alone*,”<sup>239</sup> and so on. In the second book of the *Histories*, when describing the famous Mount Carmel, located in Judea, he says: “*The god has no image or temple – such is the rule handed down by the fathers; there is only an altar and the worship of the god*.”<sup>240</sup> Could such a thing be further away from the worship of the head of a donkey, the most filthy and stupid of all animals? But let me tell you what my intuition suggests, in the form of a conjecture – without persisting in asserting it too tenaciously.

I have observed in the Holy Scripture that many things such as the means and instruments of miracles or victories were commemorated and consecrated in holy places in memory of divine favours. The vessel of manna and Aaron’s rod that brought forth almonds were placed in the sanctuary by divine precept.<sup>241</sup> Likewise, the copper serpent, which healed wounds inflicted by venomous snakes when one looked at it and which was made during the time of Moses<sup>242</sup> – it was also preserved until the time of Hezekiah, when, as a result of abuse from the people, it was converted into an abominable idol.<sup>243</sup> The twelve stones that were removed from the Jordan riverbed for the commemoration of the awesome splitting of its waters, as recounted in Joshua 4, met a similar fate.<sup>244</sup> The same occurred with the sword with which the young David severed the head of Goliath, which was placed in the sanctuary near the priestly clothes of the High Priest. When the priests gave it [59v] to David, they were brutally slaughtered by Saul in response.<sup>245</sup>

It could very well be that the donkey’s head relates to Samson, the strongest of men and a distinguished leader of the Jews. Having defeated a thousand Philistines with a donkey’s jaw, Samson became extremely thirsty. He turned to God, and from the jaw sprang forth a great abundance of water, which he drank and which restored him, as recounted in the book of Judges, chapter 19.<sup>246</sup> An effigy of a donkey’s jaw with water pouring from it was placed in the Temple in commemoration of this most valorous feat, where everything occurred miraculously and not by means of

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**239** Tacitus, *Histories* V:5.

**240** Ibid. II:78.

**241** This is a controversial point. Some biblical sources assert that there was nothing in the Sanctuary except the tables of the Law (1 Kings 8:9, to which also refers Talmud Bavli, Bava Batra 14a). As far as manna is concerned, Luzzatto is referring to Exodus 16:33. For Aaron’s rod, see Numbers 17. However, see also the *Epistola ad Hebreos* 9:3–4: “Post velamentum autem secundum, tabernaculum, quod dicitur Sancta sanctorum: 4 aureum habens thuribulum, et arcam testamenti circumtectam ex omni parte auro, in qua urna aurea habens manna, et virga Aaron, qua fronderat, et tabula testamenti.”

**242** Numbers 21:4–9.

**243** 2 Kings 18:4.

**244** Joshua 4:1–9.

**245** 1 Samuel 22:9–19.

**246** Judges 15:15–19.

semplice forza humana, ché dopo mutandosi la fortuna degli Hebrei, si convertì quel munimento di gloria, in scherno, et irrisione appresso gli popoli stranieri, e diede occasione alla favola calunniando che gli asini mostrano agli Hebrei il fonte d'acqua. Quest'è quanto ch'io posso congetturare in cosa tanto dubbiosa.

Altra calunnia sogionse diffamando la nazione come dissoluta nella carnalità, *proiectissima ad libidinem gens, alienarum concubitu abstinent; inter se nihil inlicitum*, se parla de sbandati e transgressori non è di farsene caso, non essendo ciò difetto della nazione, ma piuttosto dell'humana fragilità o conditione de tempi, ma se ei riferisce all'institutione degli Hebrei dalla verità assai si dilunga, non v'essendo [60r] stata nazione a quelli tempi più ritenuta dalle leggi proprie da commerci carnali quanto gli Hebrei. Gli Egittii non affatto barbari, anzi maestri de Greci di molte dottrine, tuttavia prendevano le sorelle per mogli, e gli Re tolemei ne furono esemplari al popolo comune. Gli Persiani ch'hanno goduto il dominio dell'Asia, e la sogettione della Grecia, trapassarono un grado più oltre di turpitudine, permettendo a figliuoli le proprie madri. E Crisippo propagatore della stoica disciplina pretendente a lui doversi la riforma del genere humano, tenne tal esecranda attione per indifferente, e con alcune sue induzioni s'affaticò renderla quasi honesta, come appresso Sesto Empirico si legge.

Gli Hebrei non solo questi più vicini gradi di parentella come esecrandi, e nefandi dannorono, ma ancora abborirono in parte gli laterali ineguali, e certo non furono più sciolti, che gli Romani, anzi in alcun caso molto più di loro corretti, et osservanti. Appresso gli Romani era lecito licentiar, e repudiare la moglie, e si poteva rimariare con altri, e dopo essendo repudiata dal secondo marito gli era lecito ritornare di nuovo al primiero, et a guisa di casa affittarsi, e di giumenta nolegiarsi, introducendo ne' commerci matrimoniali gli usufruttuarii, e proprietari. E gli Lacedemoni instituiti da Ligurgo, riverito dall'oracolo [60v] d'Apolline, come se fusse stato un dio, concesse ai suoi Spartani il prestar le mogli per conseguirne generosa prole, senza la cerimonia del repudio. E Catone il magior senatore de suoi tempi, quel vindice della romana libertà, contraposto a Cesare, se non per il possesso del mondo, almeno per l'acquisto della virtù, havendo trionfato dell'humanità, com'il suo rivale degli huomini, onde Lucano:

simple human strength. Subsequently, after the fortune of the Jews had changed, that monument of glory became little more than a joke, mocked by foreigners, and it gave rise to the fable that donkeys had led the Jews to the source of water. This is what I surmise with regard to such a dubious tale.

Then he [i.e., Tacitus] added another calumny to defame the Jewish Nation, painting it as dissolute in its carnal impulses: “*And although as a race, they are prone to lust, they abstain from intercourse with foreign women; yet among themselves nothing is unlawful.*”<sup>247</sup> If this alludes to petty criminals and transgressors, the accusation should be ignored, since it would not be a defect on the part of the Jews, but rather a defect stemming from human fragility or from the condition of the times. But if this refers to the customs of the Jews, it could not be further from the truth, since there has never [60r] been a nation more restricted regarding carnal relationships than the Jews. The Egyptians, who were by no means barbarians but in fact passed on many doctrines to the Greeks, took their sisters for wives, and the Ptolemaic kings set an example [of this habit] to the common people. The Persians, who enjoyed dominion over Asia and the subjugation of Greece, passed to a higher level of turpitude, permitting sons to wed their own mothers. Chrysippus, the propagator of Stoic philosophy, claimed that he was responsible for the reform of the human race, and yet he remained indifferent in the face of such a detestable practice; on the contrary, by means of some of his reasoning he sought to describe it as almost honest, as one can read in the books of Sextus Empiricus.<sup>248</sup>

As for the Jews, not only did they denounce such acts committed with close relations as execrable and wicked, but they also partially avoided relationships of the second and third degree.<sup>249</sup> And they were certainly no more lenient than the Romans, but indeed more strict and law-abiding. Indeed, the Romans were permitted to dismiss a wife in order that she could marry another man. After being repudiated by the second husband, it was permitted for a wife to return once again to her first. And in this way, the wife was like a house or a mare that could be rented. Thus, beneficiaries and owners were introduced into the matrimonial sphere. The Lacedaemonians, who were given their institutions by Lycurgus, who was revered by the Oracle [60v] of Apollo as if he were a god, allowed the Spartans to lend out their wives to beget many children without the repudiation ceremony.<sup>250</sup> Cato was the greatest senator of his time and the renowned advocate of Roman liberty and he could be compared to Caesar, if not regarding the domination of the world, then at least regarding the acquisition of virtue. He triumphed over human limits as his rival did over men. As Lucan writes:

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<sup>247</sup> Tacitus, *Histories* V.5.

<sup>248</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* I:14,152 and 160 (tenth mode); Philo, *On the Special Laws* III; Tertullian, *Apology* IX.

<sup>249</sup> Here we are following Lattes's translation, where he suggests that Luzzatto is referring to aunts from both the paternal and the maternal side; see Lattes, *Ma'amar*, 165 n. 116.

<sup>250</sup> Plutarch, *Lives*, “Lycurgus” V:3 and XV:7–8.

*Haec duri inmota Catonis,  
Secta fuit servare modum finemque tenere  
Naturamque sequi, patriaeque inpendere vitam,  
Nec sibi sed toti genitum se credere mundo.*

Tuttavia Martia la più conspicua matrona di Roma, sua moglie, fu concessa da lui ad Ortensio il più famoso oratore di quel secolo per conseguirne prole, e poi licentia-  
ta, di nuovo fece ritorno al primo marito Catone, e l'istesso Lucano il fa dire:

*<Marcia> nec dubium longo quaeratur in aevo  
mutarim primas expulsa, an tradita, taedas.*

Et in tal maniera fu raccolta dall'indulgente Catone, per altro molto severo, e rigoroso in osservare la disciplina dell'honestà, la qual attione sarebbe stata dannata dalle leggi degli Hebrei come turpe, et infame, essendo tollerato il repudio per cagione d'alcun difetto ritrovato nella donna. E se dopo l'essersi accompagnata con il secondo marito, di nuovo è sciolta per repudio, ovvero morto, è stimato abominevole, e dettestando il [61r] riaccoppiarsi con il primo, come nel Deuteronomio si legge. Si può anco aggiungere alle dette prohibitioni il divieto d'accostarsi a donne menstruate, essendovi incluso anco la propria moglie.

Et ho notato che ritrovandosi nella Sacra Scrittura registrate tante transgressioni d'idolatria et homicidio commesse dal popolo, rarissimi furono gli avvenimenti d'adulterii, et incesti occorsi dopo la promulgatione della Legge. La dissolutione del popolo con le donne madianite, fu eccesso che n'anco l'autore ne farebbe riflesso affermando che con l'aliene ordinariamente osservano astinentia, e fu castigato severamente da Iddio, e punito da Moisè e Fineas, come nel libro de Numeri si legge.

Al tempo de Giudici capitolo 19 seguiva infame tentativo contra l'honestà d'un certo forastiero che capitò nella colina de Biniamin, che fu poi esequito nella sua concubina, il qual indegno misfatto suscitò tanto furore, et indignatione nel resto del popolo, che conspirando contra il sudetto tribù affatto quasi rimase distrutto, che pur era la 12[ma] parte del popolo, e fu anco con solenne giuramento preso e deliberato di giamai imparentarsi con il residuo di progenie sì perversa.

*Such was the character, such the inflexible rule of austere Cato – to observe moderation and hold fast to the limit, to follow nature, to give his life for his country, to believe that he was born to serve the whole world and not himself.*<sup>251</sup>

Nonetheless, he gave his wife Marcia, the most respected matron of Rome, to Hortensius, the most famous orator of the century, to obtain children. After Marcia was sent away, she returned once again to her first husband Cato, and the same Lucan says of them:

*Let not the question be disputed in after time, whether I was driven out or handed over by you to a second husband.*<sup>252</sup>

And in this way, the indulgent Cato – usually very severe and rigorous in his observance of the discipline of honesty – took her back. His conduct would have been condemned by Jewish Law as base and vile, since repudiation is tolerated only if a defect is found in the woman. And if, after she has been joined unto her second husband, the marriage is also dissolved by means of divorce or death, her **[61r]** return to the first husband is considered abominable and detestable, as one reads in Deuteronomy.<sup>253</sup> In addition, one can add to these prohibitions the interdiction against approaching menstruating women, including one's own wife.<sup>254</sup>

I noted that in the Holy Scripture one can find a record of many transgressions related to idolatry and homicide perpetrated by the people, but it is extremely rare to find adulterous or incestuous activities occurring after the promulgation of the Law. The licentiousness of the Jewish people with the Medianite women was so excessive that not even that author [i.e., Tacitus] paid attention to it when writing that the Jews usually observed abstinence with outsiders. Nonetheless, the Jews were severely castigated by God and punished by Moses and Phineas, as is written in the book of Numbers.<sup>255</sup>

In the time of [the book of] Judges, chapter 19, a vile attempt against a foreigner who found himself on the hill of the tribe of Benjamin occurred, perpetrated against his concubine. This shameful deed provoked great indignation among that part of the populace, which conspired against the aforementioned tribe and almost entirely destroyed it, despite its being a twelfth of the Jewish people. As a result, the people deliberated on the matter and solemnly vowed never to marry the remaining descendants of such a depraved tribe.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Lucan, *The Civil War* II:380–83.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid. II:344–45.

<sup>253</sup> Deuteronomy 24:1–4.

<sup>254</sup> Leviticus 18:19.

<sup>255</sup> Numbers 25.

<sup>256</sup> Judges 19–20 and 21:1.

Amnon figliuolo di David sceleratamente s'invaghì di Tamar sua sorella, e tant'oltre passò l'infame amore che proditoriamente in casa sua propria la violentò, e stuprò, ma non sì tosto ch'esequì l'esecrand'atione gli penetrò nell'animo il pentimento e displicenza del misfatto commesso, [61v] ché senz'altro riprensore, et admonitore, non solamente la diformità del peccato se gli fece obrobriosa, ma anco quell'infelici bellezze ch'occasionarono, et accesero in lui così dannato ardore gli divennero odiose, e piene d'orrore, onde cacciata pubblicamente di casa la sorella, se gli acrebbe infamia con gli huomini ma diminuì la sua colpa appresso Iddio per la severa condannagione, ch'esequì nella sua conscientia contra le proprie attioni. Oltre che d'alcuni espositori hebrei è diffuso, che non fosse stata Tamar propriamente sorella, non essendo nata di donna hebreia sposata a David, nel che non voglio alungare.

Quarto avvenimento fu l'adulterio di David con Bersabea famoso più per la penitenza di David, esemplare a tutta la posterità, ch'ad altrui scandalosa per il peccato, essendo stato questo commesso una sol volta da David. Ma infinite furono le sue lacrime retrattationi, esclamationi ad Iddio per il perdono, ché perciò maestro della reconciliatione, e penitenza, fu da fedeli appellato, et egli celebrando se stesso disse *docebo iniquos vias tuas, et impii ad te convertuntur*.<sup>51</sup>

Quinto avvenimento fu l'incesto che commisse Absalon con le concubine di suo padre, che non essendo state sposate si può diminuire il delitto, tuttavia non fu ciò dissolutione di carnalità, né disprezzo delle patrie leggi, n'ebbe in ciò fine [62r] d'ingiuriare il padre, ma solo per rispetto di Stato e desio di regnare. Così consigliato dall'acuto statista di quei tempi Achitofel, deliberò Absalon d'impossessarsi del regno degli Hebrei in vita del padre David, che ne teneva il dominio, et havendo satelitio di molto popolo seditioso, che seguiva li suoi tentativi, tuttavia dubitava d'incontrare in alcuna perplessità, et irresolutione nel popolo che poteva sospettare, che fra padre, e figliuolo si introducesse alcuna compositione, e reconciliatione, e che gli affetti del sangue potessero prevalere all'interesse di Stato, ché perciò seguita tal concordia, gli coadiutori d'Absalon dovessero poi restare odiati, e puniti non meno da David, che d'Absalon, essendo costume de' prencipi con diverso occhio mirare il tradimento, ch'il traditore.

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<sup>51</sup> Psalmi 50:15: "Docebo iniquos vias tuas, et impii ad te convertentur."

Amnon, the son of David, wickedly fell in love with his sister Tamar. This vile love overwhelmed him in such a way that he raped and violated her in his own home. But immediately upon performing this execrable act, he felt great remorse and sorrow for the misdeed he had committed. [61v] Then without anyone admonishing or castigating him, not only did the deformity of his acts strike him as shameful, but the unfortunate beauty that had caused such vile ardour in him made his sister hateful to him and filled him with horror. Thus he publicly chased his sister from the house.<sup>257</sup> By acting in this way, his infamy in the eyes of men grew, but his guilt diminished before God because of his harsh condemnation of himself, which he carried out in his conscience against his own actions.<sup>258</sup> Furthermore, some Jewish interpreters defend him, arguing that Tamar was not actually his sister, as she was born to a Gentile woman married to David.<sup>259</sup> However, I do not wish to speak further about this episode.

The fourth occurrence is David's adultery with Bathsheba, which is famous more for David's penitence – exemplary for all posterity – than for the scandal of the sin he committed that one time. But his tears, retractions, and appeals for forgiveness from God were endless.<sup>260</sup> For this reason, faithful people called him a master of reconciliation and penitence. While celebrating his own ability [to bring about reconciliation], he said: "*Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways; and sinners shall return unto Thee.*"<sup>261</sup>

The fifth occurrence was the incest that Absalom committed with his father's concubines. Since they were not married, the crime becomes less severe. However, this act was not inspired by debauched, carnal desire, nor by disdain for the laws of the land, and nor did [Absalom] [62r] want to injure his father. He acted out of ambition with regard to the state, because he was driven by a desire to reign. On the advice of one sharp statesman of the time, Achitophel, Absalom decided to seize the kingdom of the Jews from his father David while David was still alive and in control.<sup>262</sup> Since in this he was supported by the great seditious masses, who closely followed him in his attempts, he nonetheless doubted that he would encounter any hesitation or irresolution among this populace. In fact, they might in turn have suspected that some agreement or reconciliation would occur between father and son and that blood ties and love between relatives would prevail over the interests of the state. But if there was then a reconciliation, Absalom's assistants would be hated and punished by both David and Absalom. For this is the custom of princes: they punish treachery with very different measures to the traitors.

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257 2 Samuel 13.

258 2 Samuel 13:1–19.

259 Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 21a.

260 2 Samuel 11 and 12:1–19.

261 Psalms 51:15. Hebrew: *אלֵיךְ יָשׁוּבוּ, וְחַטָּאִים, וְרוֹשְׁעִים דְּרַכֶּיךָ*.

262 2 Samuel 16:20–23.



E però fu admonito dal sagace Achitofel per confermare meglio l'animo de suoi seguaci, e levarli ogni sospetto di pace, e concordia, che dovesse commettere attione neffanda, et ignominiosa in disprezzo del padre, che per tal via sarebbero certi, esserre cisa, e troncata ogni speranza d'amistà, buona corrispondenza tra padre, e figliuolo. Consiglio preso da molti rettori de popoli, e capitani d'esserciti d'usare attioni crudelissime verso gli nemici per fermare l'animo de suoi, e render se stessi confidenti appresso il volgo, e levargli di capo li [62v] pen[sieri de reconciliatione, et accordo come fece Hanone in trucidare un numero de schiavi romani in Cartagine, e Mitridate per altro sapientissimo re fece andare a fil di spada 80 mila Romani che nell'Asia se ritrovavano.

Così ancora Absalon fondò la sua sceleragine sopra la speme dell'aquisto del regno, ma non spronato da voglia libidinosa. Com'anco Agripina capitò a quell'infame incesto, e tentò la lusura del figliuolo spinta non da stimoli di carnalità, ma da veementi impulsi d'ambitione, e desiderio di dominio, e conforme appunto quello dice Svetonio delle dissolutioni d'Augusto *adulteria quidem exercuisse ne amici quidem negant, excusantes sane non libidine, sed ratione commissa, quo facilius consilia adversariorum per cuiusque mulieres esquireret.*

Gli avvenimenti sopra narrati sono rari e pochi, rispetto alle molte dissolutioni, e nefande obscenità de Romani, et incomparabili agli nefandi spori, e doryphori di Nerone, et altri vituperii di quelli secoli, che non si possono leggere senza rossore, e verecundia, dovendosi appellarli piuttosto monstruosità del genere humano che viti e scorrettioni, onde Iuvenale:

*O Pater urbis  
Unde nefas tantum Latiis pastoribus? unde  
Haec tetigit, Gradive, tuos urtica nepotes?  
Traditur ecce viro clarus genere atque opibus vir.*

Dal che si può giudicare con quanta verità pronunziò Tacito degli Hebrei *inter se nihil inlicitum.*

For this reason, Absalom was advised by the sagacious Achitophel to convince his followers and to remove any suspicion they might have about potential peace and harmony with his father. Hence, he had to commit an evil and ignominious act in order to display his contempt for his father. In this way, they would be certain that every hope of friendship and understanding between father and son had been destroyed. Similar measures have been adopted by many rulers of people and army captains who indulge in the cruellest actions towards their enemies in order to appease the conscience of their people, and in order to gain their trust and expel [62v] any suspicion of reconciliation from their minds.<sup>263</sup> This is also what Hanno did by killing a number of Roman slaves in Carthage,<sup>264</sup> and [what] Mithridates, who was the wisest of kings, [also did] when he had eighty thousand Romans who had ended up in Asia put to death by the sword.

So Absalom too gave in to his wickedness in the hope of acquiring the kingdom. But he was not spurred on by a lecherous desire, as was the case with Agrippina. In fact, she came to incestuous infamy and encouraged the lasciviousness of her son, motivated not by carnal desire, but by her ambition and desire for power.<sup>265</sup> Indeed, that which Suetonius says of the dissolution of Augustus conforms to this: *“That he was given to adultery not even his friends deny, although it is true that they excuse it as committed not from passion but from policy, the more readily to get track of his adversaries designs through the women of their households.”*<sup>266</sup>

The events narrated above are rare and few in comparison to the frequent debaucheries and wicked obscenities of the Romans; nor can they be compared to Nero’s wicked [acts with] Sporus and Doryphorus,<sup>267</sup> and other immoral conduct prevalent during those centuries, which one cannot read without blushing and being embarrassed, making one call them monstrosities of the human race rather than vices and defects. As Juvenal states:

*O Father of our city, whence came such wickedness among thy Latin shepherds? How did such a lust possess thy grandchildren, O Gradivus? Behold! Here you have a man of high birth and wealth.*<sup>268</sup>

From this, one can wisely judge that which Tacitus pronounced about the Jews, *“yet among themselves nothing is unlawful.”*<sup>269</sup>

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**263** For the interpretation of this episode, see Abraham Melamed, *The Philosopher-King in Medieval and Renaissance Jewish Thought* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 171–72.

**264** See Polybius, *The Histories* I:65–88.

**265** See Tacitus, *Annals* XIV:2.

**266** Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars*, “The Deified Augustus” II:69.

**267** Ibid., “Nero” VI:28–29.

**268** Juvenal, *Satires* II:126–29.

**269** Tacitus, *Histories* V:5, already quoted on page 59v.

[63r] Terza censura ragionando degli Hebrei dice, *et quia apud ipsos fides obstinata misericordia in pro[m]ptu, sed adversus omnes alios hostile odium*, a mio credere è periodo da per sé disgiunto dalle cose antedette, et inferisse due querelle della natione. Prima gli oppone un odio hostile, che tiene verso qualunque alieno da essa. La seconda ch'anco la carità usata verso gli suoi proprii, è piuttosto estorta, e con violenza spermuta da ostinata resolutione, e reciproca conspiratione, ch'originata dalla virtù e bontà morale.

Ma quanto questo sia lontano dalla mosaica institutione dalli doi discorsi precedenti si può giudicare. Tuttavia gli voglio contraponere l'autorità del nostro Filone non minor di lui d'eruditione, e dottrina, e si può dire quasi a lui coetaneo, havendo vissuto sotto Caio Caligola, e Tacito nato a tempo di Claudio che gli successe. Trattando egli sopra il significato degli sacri vestimenti del maggior sacerdote, dimostrò che furono un tipo, e simulacro de tutto l'universo. Il che ancora espone con gran dottrina Gioseffo nel libro dell'*Antichità Giudaiche*, soggiungendo poi il sudetto Filone alcune ragioni sopra ciò, fra gli altre dice, *est tertium huius sacrae vestis mysterium non praeterve[re]ndum silentio, nam alii sacerdotes, tantum pro familiaribus amicis civibusque solent rem divinam facere, at Iudaeorum Pontifex, nam solum pro toto humano genere, verum etiam pro naturae* [63v] *partibus terra, aqua, aere, igne precatur, et agit gratias, quippe extimat mundum, ut re vera est suam patriam, solitus supplicationibus ei reddere propitium parentem conditoremque suum.*

Il simile si trova nel libro d'Esdra capitolo 6 ch'havendo raccontato il decreto di Dario per l'offerte quotidiane, che si dovevano somministrare delle facoltà reggie al sacro altare di Hierusalem, rende la ragione di tal munificenza, *offerent oblationes Deo coeli, orentque pro vitae Regis, et filiorum Regis.*<sup>52</sup> E se fosse vero il detto di Tacito che tanto livore, et inimicitia, vertiscono fra gli Hebrei et altre nationi, che grande semplicità sarebbe stata quella di Dario, arricchire di doni quel Tempio, e prestar comodità a quella gente, ch'invece di benedire, hanno per costume l'esacrare, e blasfemiare l'altre nationi? E chi ne poteva essere più raguagliato, che l'istesso Dario, sotto il cui dominio per sì lungo tratto di tempo dimorarono gli Hebrei. Et Alessandro il Grande non solo

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52 Esdrae 6:10: "Et offerant oblationes Deo caeli, orentque pro vita regis, et filiorum eius."

[63r] The third criticism he [i.e., Tacitus] propagated against the Jews states: “And [they are] always ready to show compassion, but toward every other people they feel only hate and enmity.”<sup>270</sup> I believe this sentence stands alone, separate from the aforementioned issues, expressing two accusations against the Jewish Nation. First, it charges them [i.e., the Jews] with a hostile hatred, which was maintained against any foreigner not belonging to the nation. Second, even the charity offered to members of their nation is somehow extorted and obtained through force as if it were the result of an obstinate resolution and common conspiracy rather than stemming from virtue and moral goodness.

One can judge for oneself how far the Mosaic institution is from these allegations, on the grounds of the two preceding discourses. Nonetheless, I wish to oppose him [i.e., Tacitus] with the authority of our Philo, who was no less erudite or learned than him. Furthermore, the two men were almost contemporaries, for Philo lived under Caius Caligula and Tacitus was born in the time of Caius Caligula’s successor, Claudius. When he [i.e., Philo] explored the meaning of the holy vestments of the highest priest, he demonstrated that they were a model and representation of the entire universe. This same issue was discussed with great care by Josephus in his book *Jewish Antiquities*.<sup>271</sup> The aforementioned Philo added some notes on the subject. Among other things, he states: “There is also a third truth symbolized by the holy vesture which must not be passed over in silence. Among the other nations the priests are accustomed to offer prayers and sacrifices for their kinsmen and friends and fellow-countrymen only, but the high priest of the Jews makes prayers and gives thanks not only on behalf of the whole human race but also for the parts of nature, [63v] earth, water, air, fire. For he holds the world to be, as in very truth it is, his country, and in its behalf he is wont to propitiate the Ruler with supplication and intercession.”<sup>272</sup>

Similarly, one finds in the book of Ezra, chapter 6, that, according to the decree of Darius<sup>273</sup> about daily offerings, the king’s revenue must be used to support and rebuild the holy altar of Jerusalem, explaining such munificence as follows: “That they may offer sacrifices of sweet savour unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons.”<sup>274</sup> And if Tacitus’s claim about so great a spite and hostility growing between the Jews and other nations is true, how ingenuous would it have been for Darius to endow the Temple with gifts and support those people who were accustomed to insulting and cursing other nations instead of welcoming them? And who could be better informed than the same Darius, under whose rule the Jews lived for such a great stretch of time? Alexander the Great similarly demon-

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<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

<sup>271</sup> Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* III:184.

<sup>272</sup> Philo, *On the Special Laws* I:97.

<sup>273</sup> See glossary.

<sup>274</sup> Hebrew: ד-להוון מהקרבין ניווחין, לאלה שמיא; ומצליין, לחיי מלכא ובנוהי.

con offerte regali, ma con il rispetto, e riverenza dimostrò quanto gli pareva esser giovevole l'havere il Dio adorato dagli Hebrei propitio e favorevole per mezzo degl'imprecationi del maggior sacerdote, come narra Gioseffo nel libro d'*Antichità*, benché di nascita hebreo sincerissimo, et alieno d'ogni passione. Et Hieremia profeta per nome d'Iddio admonì al popolo soggiogato da Caldei, che dovesse implorare Iddio per la [64r] salute, e tranquillità della città di Babilonia capo del regno de Caldei, *et quaerite pacem civitatis ad quam transmigrare vos feci, et orate pro ea ad Dominum, quia in pace illius, erit pax vobis.*<sup>53</sup> Dalle cose dette si può formare giuditio quanto Tacito si lasciasse trasportare da fregolato affetto d'animo con l'affermare che la carità degli Hebrei, dimana, e scaturisce da proterva ostinatione, e che più oltre dagli limiti della natione, non si diffonde, e dilata.

Quarta reclamatione dell'istesso, havendo narrato che si trovò una vite d'oro nel Tempio, e che gli sacerdoti havevano per costume di cingersi con hedera, et essercitarsi con varii instrumenti musicali, fu creduto da principio ch'essi Hebrei adorassero Bacco domatore dell'Oriente. Ma meglio praticandoli si trovò falsissima questa credenza, e rende la ragione di ciò con dire *Iudeorum mos absurdus sordidusque*. E non è dubbio che riferisce alle cerimonie del culto divino. Ma non saprei immaginarmi in che cosa era così sconvenevole il loro rito, in quanto a quello ch'apparteniva a sacrificii, et uccisioni d'animali ne quali consisteva quasi tutte le cerimonie, e fontioni sacre della Legge mosaica. In tutto quell'intervallo che perseverò insino a tempi dell'istesso Tacito, universalmente il culto di tutte le nationi s'esequivava con le vittime et offerte d'animali, anzi ch'insino il porco, e il [64v] cane appresso gli Romani s'osservano sopra gli loro altari, e da barbari, e parte di Greci ancor gl'istessi huomini furono sacrificati a quelli falsi dèi.

Il caso d'Agamenone, et Ifigenia diede occasione all'impio Lucretio d'invehire contra la religione argomentando da un'attione superstitiosa, et esecranda che fu l'immolatione della sudetta Ifigenia alla diffamatione della religione in universale, onde nel primo conclude con dire *tantum religio potuit suadere*

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<sup>53</sup> Jeremias 29:7: "Et quaerite pacem civitatis ad quam transmigrare vos feci et orate pro ea ad Dominum quia in pace illius erit pax vobis."

strated – with gifts as well as respect and reverence – how profitable it was for him to have the God worshipped by the Jews favourably disposed to him by the prayers of the high priest. This is what Josephus narrates in the book of *Antiquities*,<sup>275</sup> and despite being Jewish by birth, he was most sincere and alien to every passion. And the prophet Jeremiah, in the name of God, admonished the people when they were subjugated by the Chaldeans and ordered them to pray to God for [64r] health and tranquillity in the city of Babylon, which was the capital city of the kingdom of the Chaldeans: “*And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.*”<sup>276</sup> From what I have said, one can deduce just how Tacitus allowed himself to be led by a strong affection of the soul when he stated that the charity of the Jews emanated from arrogant obstinacy, and did not spread beyond the limits of the nation.

The fourth allegation made by that same man [i.e., Tacitus] is the following: after having narrated that a golden vine had been found in the Temple, and that the priests had the custom of crowning themselves with ivy and playing various musical instruments, it was initially believed that these Jews adored Bacchus, tamer of the Orient. But the more one becomes acquainted with the Jews and their customs, the more one finds this assertion quite false. And he [i.e., Tacitus] gives the following reason for his statement by saying: “*The ways of the Jews are preposterous and mean.*”<sup>277</sup> There is no doubt that he is referring to the ceremonies of divine worship. However, I cannot imagine what could have appeared so unseemly in their ritual as far as sacrifices and the killing of animals were concerned, upon which were based almost all of the ceremonies and holy functions of Mosaic Law. In the entire period up to the times of the same Tacitus, the worship of all nations was universally performed by means of sacrifices and animal offerings. Indeed, even pigs [64v] and dogs were offered on the altars of the Romans and the barbarians, and parts of the Greek nation even continued to sacrifice human beings to their false gods.

In the case of Agamemnon and Iphigenia, the impious Lucretius was given the opportunity to rail against religion, arguing on the basis of a [particular] act of superstitious and execration, such as the sacrifice of the aforementioned Iphigenia, that religion had to be universally detested. Thus in the first book [of *On the Nature of Things*], he concludes by saying: “*So potent was Superstition in persuading to evil*

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275 Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* XI:331–39.

276 Hebrew: ודרשו את-שלום העיר, אשר הגליתי אתכם שמה, והתפללו בעדה, אל-יהוה: כי בשלומה, יהיה לכם שלום.

277 Tacitus, *Histories* V:5. Tacitus's argument is the following: although the Jewish rite seems to recall the adoration of Bacchus, this is not the case. In fact, he explains, the ceremonies of Bacchus's cult are festive and joyous, while the ways of the Jews are preposterous and mean.

*malorum*. V'aggiunge poi la sordidezza cioè la viltà del culto, ma ancor questo è proferito con l'istessa verità come li primi, poichè gli Hebrei furno sontuosi nell'edificare gli templi dedicati a Iddio più che qual altra nazione. Salomone impiegò nelle montagne ottanta mila huomini nel lapidicidio solamente con tutta quella cura che racconta la Sacra Historia nel primo de Re,<sup>54</sup> et Herode suo emulo se non in altro che nella grandezza dell'animo, procurò anch'egli nelle fabbriche immortalare il suo nome. Le vittime erano numerosissime, come nell'history di Salomone si lege, gli cantori sopra modo essercitati, e valenti, il che si può giudicare dalla numerosità d'instrumenti, ch'appena hora n'abbiamo in tanta copia. Gli gradi delle fontioni furono talmente distinti ch'in quindici ordini erano divisi, come negli aforismi nel trattato delle contributioni [65r] an|nue si lege detto *Secalim*. Numerosissima era la copia di persone, che s'essercitavano in servizio de sacrificii e Tempio, poichè tutto un tribù ch'era la terzadecima parte del popolo vi s'impiegava. Et al tempo di Roboam credo era molto più, a proportion del resto della nazione, essendo stati da Iero-boam idolatra divisi, e separati dieci Tribù dal culto divino, per il che ove vi s'adoperava tanta quantità di gente non si poteva dire che v'occorresse sordidezza, et abietione.

Quinta censura, impone agli Hebrei che s'astengono dal mangiar la carne di porco per esser stati infetti da spetie di lebre solita occorrere a quell'immondo e lordissimo animale, che se non gli fosse stato interdetto la lepre, et il coniglio, e tanti pesci che sono le delicatezze delle mense, haverrebbe potuto Tacito con alcun'apparenza diffendere la sua calunnia. Ma come statista ch'egli era poteva tali prohibitioni con più sua verecundia applicare a quelle istesse ragioni descritte da Isocrate, lodando Busiride re d'Egitto, *multas enim eis varias exercitationes ille constituit, ut qui quaedam ex animalibus apud nos contemptis coli, et honorare lege lata voluerit, non quod eorum vim ignoraverit, sed partim censuit vulgus assuefaciendum esse ad observandum omnia principum edicta partim in rebus* [65v] *evi|dentibus experire voluit, quomodo erga occulta affecti essent*. Volendo inferire che agli Egittii non solo gli era proibito il mangiar la carne d'alcuni animali, ma ancor li fu istituito da Busiride l'adorarli, come dèi, onde Iuvenale deridendoli nella Satira 15:

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54 3Regum 4:26.

deeds.”<sup>278</sup> To this, [Tacitus] adds the disreputable nature and vileness of worship, but this too he utters with the same truth as earlier statements, since the Jews were more sumptuous in the building of temples dedicated to God than any other nation. Solomon employed eighty thousand men in the mountains to cut stone with the greatest care, as told in the sacred history of the first book of Kings.<sup>279</sup> And Herod emulated him only in the greatness of his soul, also seeking to immortalise his name with the buildings. Victims were numerous, as one reads in the story of Solomon; the cantors were generally practised and skilful, as one can judge from the great number of instruments they used – many of which we still have today. Their degrees and functions were so distinct that they were divided into fifteen orders, such as the precepts in the treatise on the [65r] annual contributions, called *Sheqalim*.<sup>280</sup> A large number of people would perform the sacrifices, and in the Temple, one whole tribe, or three-tenths of the people, was employed. And in the time of Rehoboam, I believe there were many more people in proportion to the rest of the Nation, since ten tribes were divided by Jeroboam the idolater, and separated from the divine rite. And wherever so many people are in charge of divine worship, one cannot speak of degradation or decline.

The fifth allegation [Tacitus] raised against the Jews was that they abstained from eating pork because they had been infected by a type of leprosy that usually occurs in that filthy and most unclean beast. Had they not also been forbidden from eating rabbit and many fishes that are among the delicacies of the table, Tacitus would have been able to argue with some plausibility for his allegation. Being the statesman that he was, he could have shown more decency by connecting such prohibitions to the very reasons Isocrates gives when praising Busiris, king of Egypt: “*Busiris established for them numerous and varied practices of piety and ordered them by law even to worship and to revere certain animals which among us are regarded with contempt, not because he misapprehended their power, but because he thought that the crowd ought to be habituated to obedience to all the commands of those in authority, and at the same time he wished to test in visible [65v] matters how they felt in regard to the invisible.*”<sup>281</sup> By this [Isocrates] meant that not only was it prohibited for the Egyptians to eat the meat of some animals, but also Busiris instituted the adoration of these animals, as if they were gods. Therefore, Juvenal in his fifteenth satire derided them:

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<sup>278</sup> Lucretius, *On the Nature of Thing* 1:101. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* (Venetiis: in Aedibus Aldi, et andrae soceri, mense Ianuario 1515), 2v.

<sup>279</sup> 1 Kings 5:29.

<sup>280</sup> Mishnah, *Sheqalim* 4:1–9 describes the sacrifices executed by the priests. *Sheqalim* 5:1–6 mentions the duties of the priests.

<sup>281</sup> Isocrates, *Busiris* 26.



*Quis nescit, volusi Bithynice, qualia demens  
 Ægyptos portenta colat? Crocodilon adorat  
 pars haec, illa pavet saturam serpentibus ibin  
 Effigies sacri nitet aurea cercopitheci.*

V'aggiunge poco poi anco, la loro estrema fatuità in riverire li porri, e le cepole:

*Porrum et caepe nefas violare et frangere morsu  
 O sanctas gentes, quibus haec nascuntur in hortis  
 numina ! lanatis animalibus abstinet omnis  
 Mensa, etc.*

E però rende la ragione Isocrate, et esplica il mottivo ch'indusse Busiride ad introdurre tali vanità e pazzie nel popolo, e questo fu che con l'absurdità de tali institutti imposti da lui agli Egitii volse conseguirne due cose sommamente desiderabili agli dominanti: prima domare l'animo de loro sudditi, e ridurli perciò pieghevoli a suoi comandi, la seconda per esprimerli se in cosa di maggior conseguenza saranno contumaci ovvero obbedienti, et agevoli. Così poteva dire politicamente anco Tacito che tali divieti assuefanno l'animo degli huomini all'ubbidienza rendendolo pieghevole, e flessibile a suoi maggiori, ubbidiente a Iddio, ovvero [66r] ossequente a principi, a guisa ch'usano far gli maestri de cuoi, che con il casuale stropicciamento, e stiracciamento li rendono ducibili, et abili a loro lavori e manifatture. Ma gli decreti d'Iddio sopravanzano a nostre indagationi, e sono lontane dalle curiosità humane.

Sesta diffamazione, narra egli alcuni prodigi occorsi nel principio della guerra di Hierusalem, che non fu dal popolo procurata alcuna espiazione, ma affatto da esso trascurati, *evenerant prodigia, quae neque hostiis neque votis piare fas habet gens superstitioni obnoxia, religionibus adversa*. Non ho potuto penetrare quello volesse inferire con il dire che gli antichi Hebrei fossero vessati dalla superstitione, mentre ch'egli stesso affermò prima che *Iudaei mente sola unumque numen intelligunt*, e poco dopo *summum illud et aeternum neque imitabile neque interitum*, ma piuttosto li doveva accusare d'impietà, et indevotione per esser tanto trascurati, e rattenuti nel prestar fede a prodigi, che sono gli caratteri divini, che secondo la sua openione significano le minacce d'Iddio, e che ci admoniscono alla correzione de nostri affari, e revisione d'errori commessi.

*Who knows not, O Bithynian Volusius, what monsters demented Egypt worships? One district adores the crocodile, another venerates the Ibis that gorges itself with snakes. [men worship] the glittering golden image of the long-tailed ape.*<sup>282</sup>

Further on, he wrote of their extreme fatuity, claiming that they treat leeks and onions with the same reverence:

*It is an impious outrage to crunch leeks and onions with the teeth. What a holy race to have such divinities springing up in their gardens! No animal that grows wool may appear upon the dinner-table.*<sup>283</sup>

And so on. And yet, Isocrates gives us reasons and explains Busiris's motives for introducing such vanities and follies to the populace. He sought to attain two things which are highly desirable for rulers through some absurd institutions that he imposed upon the Egyptians: first, to tame the soul of his subjects, and thus render them pliant to his commands. Second, he wanted to test them to see if they would be obstinate or obedient and yielding in matters of greater consequence. Thus, Tacitus could also politically argue that such prohibitions accustomed human souls to obedience, rendering them pliant and flexible to their superiors, and obedient to God and [66r] obsequious to princes. This resembles the work of leather masters, who, with fortuitous rubbing and stretching, make the leather supple and fit to be worked and manufactured. But the decrees of God surpass our inquiries, and they are far removed from the human desire for knowledge.

Sixth defamation: he [i.e., Tacitus] narrates the story of several miracles that occurred at the beginning of the war of Jerusalem. At the time, the people did not seek atonement, but ignored such wonders. "*Prodigies had indeed occurred, but to avert them either by victims or by vows is held unlawful by a people which, though prone to superstition, is opposed to all propitiatory rites.*"<sup>284</sup> I cannot fully understand what he wishes to infer when he states that the ancient Jews were oppressed by superstition, while he himself affirms first that they "*conceive of one god only, and that with the mind alone,*" and shortly thereafter "*that supreme and eternal being is to them incapable of representation and without end.*"<sup>285</sup> Rather, he should have accused them of impiety and a lack of devotion for being so negligent and faltering in having faith in miracles, which are divine prerogatives. In fact, according to him, these miracles are expressions of a threat from God, and they admonish us, signalling that we must correct our doings and review the errors we have committed.

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<sup>282</sup> Juvenal, *Satires* XV:1–4.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, 9–12.

<sup>284</sup> Tacitus, *Histories* V:13.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, V:5.

Anzi doveva avvertire che la Legge mosaica sopra ogni altra cosa hebbe per scopo estermiare la vana superstitione dal mondo, né alcun preceto fu tante volte reiterato nella Scrittura quanto la [66v] prohibitione della magia, la giuditaria ellettiva de tempi, la negromantia, e tutte l'altre vane osservazioni, et esecrande idolatrie, che sono tutte prole della superstitione, non essendo altro essa che un abuso, o per dir meglio un escremento della vera religione, e legittimo culto de Dio. Né Moise hebbe tanto pensiero di cacciar l'impietà dal mondo, come di svelere la superstitione, poichè l'ordinata serie delle cose, il concatenato concerto delle cause, et insino l'anatomia d'un vil animaluccio convincono, e confutano l'ateismo. Per il che Elia in quel gran cimento e famosa esperientia della approbata religione, ch'espri-mentò nel monte Carmelo, convocò solamente li falsi profeti del Baal, non già gli empìi, e miscredenti, come ne Re capitolo 18 *usquequo vos claudicatis in duas partes? Si Dominus est Deus sequimini eum, si autem Baal, sequimini eum*<sup>55</sup>. Et Esaia quando voleva admonire gl'increduli, li rimetteva alla contemplatione de corsi celesti, e di quelli mirabili corpi, *levate in excelsum oculos vestros, et videte quis eduxit in numero militiam eorum*.<sup>56</sup>

E sebbene l'impietà senza proportionè è più detestabile, et odiata da Iddio, e parimente più perniciosà al Stato civile che qualunque altro delitto, come origine e fomite d'ogni atroce sceleratezza, tuttavia non mancano alla superstitione li suoi proprii difetti, e nocumenti, [67r] l'impietà essendo conscia della sua propria malvagità, e quanto sia odiosa al comune degli huomini, è perciò ritrosa, e circospetta, diligentissima, et accuratissima custode di se stessa, e con simulata apparenza procura nel falso vestito di benignità nascondersi, et occultarsi, et in rade occasioni, ma di gran conseguenza sibila il suo interno veleno. Nel resto poi tanto è lontana dal comunicarsi e dilatare la sua infettione, quanto che dall'altrui credulità spera di proffittare, et avanzarsi, conforme quel scelerato detto di Lisandro lacedemonio, *pueros tesseris, et viros iuramentis oportere circumvenire*. Et a questi scelerati empìi se gli può addattare il detto dell'istesso Tacito, trattando dell'occulta doppiezza di Tiberio, ch'essendo da un senatore scoperto un suo arcano, l'hebbe a male, onde dice, *nullam aequè Tiberius*

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55 3Regum 18:21: "Usquequo claudicatis in duas partes? Si Dominus est Deus, sequimini eum : si autem Baal, sequimini illum."

56 Isaías 40:26: "Levate in excelsum oculos vestros et videte quis creavit haec: qui educit in numero militiam eorum."

Indeed, he [i.e., Tacitus] should have recognised that above all else, the goal of Mosaic Law is the extirpation of vain superstition from the world. No other precept is reiterated as frequently in Scripture as the [66v] prohibition against magic,<sup>286</sup> the judicial magic of the times, necromancy, and all other vain observances and abominable idolatries. For they are all the offshoots of superstition, which is nothing but an abuse, or worse, a waste product of true religion and the legitimate worship of God. Indeed, Moses was not as worried about chasing impiety from the world as he was about rooting out superstition. For a regular series of events, a chain of connected causes, or even the anatomy of a base, ugly little animal is proof of the existence of God and a confutation of atheism. Therefore, Elijah, in that great trial and famous test of true religion that took place on Mount Carmel, summoned only the false prophets of Baal, not the impious and unbelieving – as anyone can read in Kings, chapter 18: “*How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.*”<sup>287</sup> Isaiah, when he wished to admonish those who were incredulous, committed them to the contemplation of celestial paths and heavenly bodies: “*Lift up your eyes on high, and see who bringeth out their host by number.*”<sup>288</sup>

God detests and abhors impiety without measure, and in the same way impiety is more pernicious to the civil state than any other crime, since it is the origin and fomentation of every atrocious wickedness. Nonetheless, superstition does not lack defects or troubles of its own; [67r] impiety is well-aware of its own evil, and it also knows how despised it is by the community of men. Thus it is also reluctant, circumspect, most diligent, and very accurate in protecting itself. With a simulated appearance and in the false clothing of kindness, it hides and conceals itself, and on rare but important occasions it injects its poison. For the rest, it retreats from making itself known and works to widen its infections, as it hopes to profit and advance from the credulity of the people. To these people, that wicked saying of Lisander the Lacedaemonian would apply: “*To cheat boys with knuckle-bones, but men with oaths.*”<sup>289</sup> To these evil, impious people, we can apply Tacitus’s statement about the hidden duplicity of Tiberius, who, when a senator discovered a mysterious plot of his, took great offence. As [Tacitus] says: “*There was none which Tiberius*

<sup>286</sup> See Giuseppe Veltri, *Magie und Halakha: Ansätze zu einem empirischen Wissenschaftsbegriff im spätantiken und frühmittelalterlichen Judentum* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1997), 23 and ff.

<sup>287</sup> 1 Kings 18:21. Hebrew: אתם פוסחים על-שתי הסעיפים--אם יהוה האלוהים לנו אחריו, ואם-- הבעל לנו אחריו.

<sup>288</sup> Isaiah 40:26. Hebrew: שאו-מרום עיניכם וראו מי-ברא אלה, המוציא במספר צבאם.

<sup>289</sup> Plutarch, *Lives*, “Lysander” VIII:4. In his *Moralia*, “On the Fortune or the Virtue of Alexander” (330F) Plutarch reports the same saying, but attributes it to the despot Dionysius. Montaigne quoted the same saying in *Essais*, book 2, chapter 18. Montaigne, *Saggi*, 391: “Quel buon compagno di Grecia diceva, che i fanciulli si trattengono con gli ossicelli, gli huomini con le parole.”

*ut rebatur ex virtutibus suis, quam dissimulationem diligebat, et egrius accepit recludi quae premerat.* E perciò disse il Salmista *dixit insipiens* (overo) *impius in corde suo non est Deus*,<sup>57</sup> circonscrive questa sua malvagia diceria nell'angusto recinto del suo cuore, non osando ad altrui propalarlo, essendo pronuntiato odioso, e detestando. E li poeti antichi attribuirono solo a pochi giganti l'impresa di cacciar Giove dal seggio celeste, cioè a tiranni, non già [67v] al comune del popolo.

Ma la superstitione è infermità affatto contagiosa et infestevole. E per la confidenza che presume havere con le cause superiori, sovente è poco circospetta nell'offender gli huomini, ma siccome anticamente fu tollerabile nel comune del volgo per alcun giovamento che da lei se ne poteva trahere conforme il detto di Curtio, *nulla res multitudinem efficacius regit, quam superstitio*, occupando però gli animi de grandi, affatto fu nociva e perniziosa, abbandonando essi quelli veri e reali mezzi, et adminicoli, che la Maestà Divina favorì gli huomini per conseguire li loro commodi et agi, et evitar le violenze, e l'oppressioni che gli possono occorrere sì per l'altrui malitia, come per temerità della fortuna.

Il mondo è simile ad un gran mercato, Iddio dispensa alcune monete per comprare quello ch'in esso v'è esposto e venale, le più correnti sono, la prudenza, e la fortezza, coniate dall'impronto d'Iddio essendo lui l'istessa scienza e potenza. Con queste si mercano tutte le cose che possono essere sotto poste all'arbitrio humano. La vera religione è quella ch'implora da Iddio la dovizia di detta pecunia, né presume facilmente senza copia di questa conseguir cosa di rilievo. E Salomone ne Proverbii capitolo 17 disse *quid prodest stulto habere divitias cum sapientiam emere non possit*<sup>58</sup>, cioè prevertisce [68r] il stolto l'ordine del commercio, essendo la sapientia il mezzo di conseguir le ricchezze, e non queste il prezzo, et il dinaro per acquistar quella. E lui stesso non meno pratico, che teorico, quando si deliberò far acquisto del regno degli Hebrei, dimandò ad Iddio la moneta della sapienza, con la quale poi acquistò qualunque cosa vi fosse di vendibile per mezzo d'essa, *et dixit Dominus Salamoni quia postulasti rem hanc*, cioè

<sup>57</sup> Psalmi 13:1: "Dixit insipiens in corde suo non est Deus."

<sup>58</sup> Proverbia 17:16: "Quid prodest stulto habere divitias, cum sapientiam emere non possit."

held in such esteem as his power of dissimulation; whence the chagrin with which he received this attempt to reveal what he chose to suppress.”<sup>290</sup> And accordingly the Psalmist states: “The fool [that is] the impious *hath said in his heart: There is no God.*”<sup>291</sup> [The impious] holds his wicked opinion in the cramped enclosure of his heart, not daring to divulge it to anyone, since it is considered so hateful and detestable. The ancient poets attribute the intention to drive Jupiter away from his celestial seat to only a few giants, that is, to the tyrants rather than [67v] to the common people.

Superstition, however, is quite a contagious and infectious disease. Despite the conformity that superstition presumes to hold with superior causes, more often than not it is prudent not to offend other men. However, in ancient times superstition was acceptable among the populace for any benefit that one could gain from it. Curtius’s words confirm this, with his saying: “*Nothing sways the common herd more effectively than superstition.*”<sup>292</sup> When it succeeded in occupying the souls of the great, it indeed became harmful and pernicious. For they abandoned those true and real means and instruments with which the divine majesty favoured men. [With these ways and devices men] can achieve their own comfort and ease and avoid the violence and oppression caused by a person’s cunning ways, also benefiting from the temerity of fortune.

The world resembles a great market; God dispenses some coins to buy that which is displayed and available. The most current [coins] are prudence and strength, forged in God’s mint, since He is [the source of] both science and power. Everything subject to human will can be bought with these [coins]. True religion is that which begs an abundance of the aforementioned coins from God, for without this abundance, it cannot hope to achieve anything important. Solomon, in Proverbs chapter 17 [states]: “to what advantage does a fool possess riches, *seeing he hath no understanding?*”<sup>293</sup> That is, the foolish man [68r] overthrows the order of commerce, since wisdom is the means to attain riches, but riches are not the price or the currency for obtaining wisdom. [Solomon] himself was no less practical than theoretical. In fact, when he deliberated over acquiring the kingdom of the Jews, he asked God for the coin of wisdom, with which he then acquired anything that was obtainable: “*And God said unto Solomon: ‘Because thou hast asked this thing, that*

290 Tacitus, *Annals* IV:71. Tacitus, *Cornelius Tacitus exacta cura recognitus*, 56: “Nullam aequè Tiberius, ut rebatur, ex virtutibus suis quàm dissimulationem diligebat. eo aegrius accepit recludi, quae premeret.”

291 Psalms 14:1. The word *impius* has been added by Luzzatto. Hebrew: אמר נבל בליבו, אין אלוהים.

292 Quintus Curtius, *History of Alexander* IV:10,7. The same text would be quoted by Spinoza in his *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, “Praefatio,” VIII.

293 Hebrew: למא-זה מחיר ביד-כסיל- לקנות חכמה ולב-אין.

la scientia, et non petisti dies multos, etc.<sup>59</sup> Sed haec quae non postulasti, dedi tibi divitias, scilicet et gloriam, ut nemo<sup>60</sup>.

Et insino appresso gli Greci passò per adagio, *Dii bona laboribus vendunt*, et il Salmista disse *expecta Dominum, viriliter age, et fortificabitur animum tuum, et expecta Dominum*<sup>61</sup>, conforme l'hebraico, cioè, conviene primieramente sperare in Dio che ci invigorisca d'animo, e che c'arrecca forze, e di nuovo sperare ch'accompagnando il suo suffragio alla nostra virtù e sufficientia faccia riuscire li nostri attentati, et imprese. E ne Proverbi capitolo 11 *iusti autem sapientia liberabuntur*<sup>62</sup>, dice che li giusti con la scienza, e prudenza si salvano, che pur doveva dire per merito della giustitia e bene operare, ma fa mentione del sapere per esser l'ultimo mezzo per conseguire la salute, concessoci da Iddio per premio delle buone e giuste opere da noi comesse. Ma la superstitione con monete false reprobate, et improprie per mercare, et acquistare [68v] alcuna cosa, pretende tuttavia d'impossessarsi del tutto.

Credevano gli antichi, ma vanamente, che gli efficaci mezzi per conseguire qual si sia cosa, fosse il proferire barbare parole a niuno intelligibili, percuotersi e dilaniarsi, sacrificar huomini, scelta de tempi, et altre improprietà, et impertinentie, non havendo cura alcuna dell'acquisto della virtù, né implorando per lei al Sommo Datore e Dispensiere, come egregiamente quell'oratore appresso Livio hebbe a dire *'Di prohibebunt haec'; sed nunquam propter me de caelo descendit; vobis dent mentem, oportet, ut prohibeatis*. Il qual concetto primo di lui fu espresso dalli compagni di Iob trovandolo per quanto ad essi pareva non tollerante nelle sue miserie, *qui perdes animam tuam in furore tuo, numquid propter te derelinquetur terra, et transferentur rupes de loco suo*,<sup>63</sup> volendoli inferire che non era meritevole che per causa sua si dovesse sconcertare l'ordine delle cose, ma ch'egli con la virtù non dovesse abbandonare se stesso, ch'il tutto superarebbe.

Né meno fu ridicolo l'antico superstitioso quando si dava a credere che l'apparenze rare, et effetti straordinarii, che scaturiscano dal seno della natura, siano lettere missive da Iddio per significarli gli arcani della sua mente. Nicia Atheniese con il suo essercito perì in

59 3Regum 3:11: "Et dixit Dominus Salomoni: quia postulasti verbum hoc, et non petisti tibi dies multos, nec divitias, aut animam inimicorum tuorum, sed postulasti tibi sapientiam ad discernendum iudicium."

60 3Regum 3:13: "Sed et haec quae non postulasti, dedi tibi: divitias, scilicet, et gloriam, ut nemo fuerit similis tui in regibus cunctis retro diebus."

61 Psalmi 26:14: "Expecta Dominum, viriliter age: et confortetur cor tuum, et sustine Dominum."

62 Proverbia 11:9: "Simulator ore decipit amicum suum; iusti autem liberabuntur scientia."

63 Job 18:4: "Qui perdis animam tuam in furore tuo, numquid propter te derelinquetur terra, et transferentur rupes de loco suo?"

is the wisdom, and hast not asked for thyself long life etc.”<sup>294</sup> “And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour – so that there hath not been any, etc.”<sup>295</sup>

Even the Greeks used to say: “*The gods demand of us toil as the price of all good things.*”<sup>296</sup> The Psalmist, in conformity with the Hebrew, states: “*Wait on the Lord; be strong, and let thy heart take courage; yea, wait thou for the Lord.*”<sup>297</sup> That is, the first of all worthwhile acts is to hope for God to invigorate our soul and grant us strength, and then again to hope that his approval matches our virtue and ability so that our attempts and undertakings shall succeed, as stated in Proverbs, chapter 11: “*Through knowledge shall the righteous be delivered.*”<sup>298</sup> That is, that the just will be saved by means of their knowledge and prudence. And even though [the verse] should have said that they will be saved by the merit of justice and good actions, it mentions knowledge as the final means of achieving the salvation God grants us as a reward for the good and just actions we carry out. On the other hand, superstition wants to take possession of everything with forged money, which is reprobate and improper for purchasing [68v] or obtaining even a single thing.

The ancients erroneously believed that the most efficacious means to achieve and obtain something was to proffer barbarous words,<sup>299</sup> unintelligible to anyone, to strike and throw themselves around, to sacrifice men, to choose favourable moments, and other improprieties and impertinences. For they had no feeling for the acquisition of virtue, nor would they beg it from the highest giver and dispenser. As the orator in Livy’s book egregiously narrates: “*The gods will forbid such a thing; but they will never come down from heaven on my account; they must give you the inspiration to forbid it.*”<sup>300</sup> Prior to him, this concept had been expressed by the companions of Job, who found, as far as they could see, that he was impatient in bearing his miseries: “*Thou that loses thyself in thine anger, shall the earth be forsaken for thee? Or shall the rocks be removed out of its place?*”<sup>301</sup> They wanted to make him understand that it was not worthwhile to upset the order of things for his own sake, but that through virtue, he could overcome everything and thus should not let himself go.

The ancient superstitious belief that some appearances and extraordinary effects that sprang forth from nature were missives sent from God to signify the mysteries of His mind is no less ridiculous. The Athenian Nicias died with his army in

294 1 Kings 3:11. Hebrew: ויאמר אלוהים אליו, יען אשר שאלת את-הדבר הזה ולא-שאלת לך ימים רבים.

295 1 Kings 3:13. Hebrew: וגם אשר לא-שאלת נתתי לך, גם-עושר גם-כבוד: אשר לא-היה כמוך איש.

296 Xenophon, *Memorabilia* II:1,20.

297 Psalms 27:14. Hebrew: קווה, אל-יהוה: חזק, ויאמץ ליבך; וקווה, אל-יהוה.

298 Hebrew: ובדעת, צדיקים ייחלצו.

299 The so-called *nomina barbara*. See Veltri, *Magie*, 190 ff.

300 Livy, *From the Founding of the City* VI:18,9.

301 Hebrew: טורף נפשו, באפו: הלמענך, תיעזב ארץ; ויעתק-צור, ממקומו.



Sicilia havendo procrastinata la sua partenza per il terrore d'un eclisse lunare effetto **[69r]** natu|rale il più regolato di qual si sia, causato dall'interposizione della Terra fra il Sole e la Luna ritrovandosi ambi li pianeti nella linea eclitica, il qual disastro era per occorrere a Germanico Cesare se non vi fosse stato provisto del suo sapere.

E li Romani tanto prudenti, adunato ch'avessero il Senato per deliberare la propulsione d'Annibale cartaginese dalle muraglie della città, se caso fosse scopiato un tuono, conveniva licentiarne immediate il Senato, benché questo poteva essere provvedimento mero politico, essendo li tuoni preludii di fulmini e saette, ch'essendo la città sottoposta a simili accidenti dubitavano che non colgiessero nel Senato con l'eccidio della Repubblica. Ma chi li potrebbe scusare ove le deliberationi di Stato, gli espeditioni militari dependevano dal volato d'uccelli, e dal loro cibarsi, e dalla vana configuratione delle viscere de animali. E perciò a mio credere ben disse Salomone, *honor Dei caelare rem, et honor Regis investigare rem*,<sup>64</sup> che (*davar*) in questo loco significa piu tosto *rem* che *verbum*, significando ch'altro tanto è onorevole e maestoso, che li misteriosi arcani d'Iddio e della vera religione siano reposti occulti e lontani dal contato dell'ignaro volgo, conforme quel virgiliano, "*procul o, procul este, profani*," *conclamat vates*, e come disse Salomone nella consacratione del Tempio, *Dominus dixit, ut habitaret in nebula*.<sup>65</sup>

Così è convenevole **[69v]** a prencipi, e monarchi d'investigar, e penetrarne l'interno, acciocché con la loro autorità, et esempio possino indrizzare il popolo al vero culto, come anco non si lasciano deludere, et illaqueare dalle falacie, et illusioni della superstitione, inganando prima se stessi, e poi quelli che li sono seguaci, poiché tali giuditii non appartengono alla turba degli huomini. E nella Sacra Scrittura vi è di ciò un chiaro documento in proposito della promulgatione della Legge nel monte Sinai ove ragionando del popolo dice *stetitque populus de longe*, come per avanti li fu commesso,

<sup>64</sup> Proverbia 25:2: "Gloria Dei est celare verbum, et gloria regum investigare sermonem."

<sup>65</sup> 3Regum 8:12: "Dominus dixit ut habitaret in nebula."

Sicily because he delayed his departure out of fear of a lunar eclipse,<sup>302</sup> a natural [69r] effect that is the most regulated of them all; it is caused by the interposition of the earth between the sun and the moon, when both planets end up on the ecliptic path. The same disaster would have befallen Germanicus Caesar if he had not foreseen it as a result of his learning.<sup>303</sup>

And the Romans, so prudent, assembled the Senate in order to deliberate on the expulsion of the Carthaginian Hannibal from the city walls. If by chance a crash of thunder was heard, they would all agree upon the immediate dismissal of the Senate. Yet this could also be considered a merely political provision, since thunders foreshadow lightning and thunderbolts. And whenever the city was subjected to similar accidents, they worried that the Senate could be struck by lightning, bringing about the ruin of the Republic. Nonetheless, who could blame them when their State deliberations and military expeditions depended upon the flight of birds or upon the way they ate, and upon the vain configuration of animal intestines? Therefore, I believe, Solomon correctly stated: “*It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.*”<sup>304</sup> In this passage, “thing” means *rem* rather than *verbum*, signifying that it is honourable and dignified, that the intimate mysteries of God and of true religion remain concealed and hidden from the ignorant masses. As Virgil states: “*Away! Away! Unhallowed ones!*” *shrieks the seer.*<sup>305</sup> And as Solomon stated at the consecration of the Temple: “*The Lord hath said that He would dwell in the thick darkness.*”<sup>306</sup>

Thus, it is proper [69v] to princes and monarchs to investigate and penetrate the inward nature of things in such a way that with their [resulting] authority and example, they can direct the people towards true religion.<sup>307</sup> Similarly, they should not allow themselves to be deluded and misled by the fallacies and illusions of superstition, tricking first themselves and then those who follow them, since such judgments do not belong to the multitude. And in this regard, there is a clear statement in the Holy Scripture relating to the promulgation of the Law at Mount Sinai, where it is said of the people “*and the people stood afar off,*” as they had been ordered before.

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302 Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* VII:50,4; Plutarch, *Lives*, “Nicias” XXIII:1–6 and 24. See also Luzzatto, *Socrates*, 302: “L’eclisse della luna perfettamente si apprende da qualunque mentre che repentinamente la sua luce si estingue, ma il saperne la cagione perché tale oscurità procede, cioè che derivi dalla interposizione della terra fra essa et il sole, detrude dal nostro animo quell’orrore che ci arreca l’osservare che uno di principali ministri della natura patisca deliquio e detrimento, dubitando noi che ciò in grande offesa e danno ridonda. Onde per tal ignoranza seguì l’eccidio dell’ateniese esercito che sotto Nicia in Sicilia militava.”

303 Tacitus, *Annals* I:28.

304 Hebrew: כבוד אלהים, הסתר דבר; וכבוד מלכים, חקור דבר.

305 Virgil, *Aeneid* VI:258–59. For the usage of this passage in the context of occult sciences, see the Florentine Humanist Petrus Crinitus (Pietro Riccio, 1465–ca. 1504) in his *De honesta disciplina* VI:3.

306 1 Kings 8:12. Hebrew: יהוה אמר, לשכון בערפל.

307 “Things” here refers to the previous *rem*.

ma del legislator dice *Moyses autem accessit ad caliginem in qua erat Deus*,<sup>66</sup> così convenien proportionatamente al Prencipe osservare rispetto al volgo.

Li prodigii e miracoli sono sregolamenti della natura, il cimento de quali appartiene a chi ha cognitione del corso ordinario degli avvenimenti del mondo, al musico incombe l'advertire la dissonanza per la peritia che tiene dell'armonia e melodia, e la medicina fu diffinita essere non solo scienza de corpi infermi, ma de sani ancora. Onde il Salmista egregiamete disse *mirabilia opera tua, et anima mea scit nimis*,<sup>67</sup> parlando egli di se stesso dice, posso affermare io con gran confidenza quali siano li miracoli d'Iddio per esser capace, et adottrinato molto delle cose consuete e naturali. La mia maraviglia non nasce da [70r] stollida ignoranza, ma da esata informatione, che tengo delle cose mondane. E se Tacito s'havesse applicato alla cognitione de Sacri Libri mosaici, e de profeti sarebbe stato piu ratenuto nel sententiar che la gente hebrea, *superstitioni obnoxia religionibus adversa*, ma se per la parola de superstitione ha voluto riferire un tenace culto, et inviolabile riverenza verso la causa superiore posponendoli qualunque humano interesse, e per religione ci ha voluto significare una regola lesbia accomodata e pieghevole ad ogni occorrenza humana, non è dubbio che poco si discostava dalla impietà, appellando la religione superstitione, e l'ateismo culto, e divotione.

Ma a tal depravatione era ridotto quell'infelice secolo, che l'adorare, e riverire il supremo nume celeste, era materia di satira, e soggetto d'irrisione, onde Iuvenale alla Satira 14:

*Quidam sortiti metuentem sabbata patrem,  
nil praeter nubes, et caeli numen adorant,*

aggiungendovi egli le nuvole, come fu imposto da Aristofane comico a Socrate sommo filosofo per la riverentia che portava alle cose celeste, e divine. Ma il tutto si poteva tollerare a poeta, che il suo proponimento è il fingere, et a professore di satire, che per istituto ha la maldicenza, ma non a sommo storico, che tiene per scopo la verità, e candidezza.

[70v] Settima irrisione fu il calunniare gli Hebrei d'otiosità et accidia per il loro solenizare il giorno settimo, e così il cessare dall'agricoltura parimente ogni settimo anno, *septimo die otium placuisse ferunt, quia is finem laborum tulerit*;

<sup>66</sup> Exodus 20:21: "Stetitque populus de longe Moses autem accessit ad caliginem in qua erat Deus."

<sup>67</sup> Psalmi 138:14: "Mirabilia opera tua et anima mea cognoscit nimis."

But it is said of the legislator: “*But Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.*”<sup>308</sup> And the prince must behave in the same way with his people.

Prodigies and miracles are flukes of nature. Only those who have knowledge of the ordinary course of events of the world must confront them. [In the same way,] it is the job of a musician to perceive dissonance, by means of the skill that harmony and melody provide him. Similarly, medicine is defined not only as the science of sick bodies, but also as [an art related] to those who are still healthy. As the Psalmist egregiously states: “*Wonderful are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.*”<sup>309</sup> [Accordingly,] while speaking of himself, he says: “I myself can confirm God’s miracles with great confidence, since I am properly qualified and educated regarding natural and customary things. Thus, my amazement is not born from [70r] stolid ignorance, but from the precise information I maintain of worldly things.” And if Tacitus had applied himself to knowledge of the holy Mosaic books and the prophets, he would have refrained from stating that the Jewish people “*though prone to superstition, is opposed to all propitiatory rites.*”<sup>310</sup> Nonetheless, if by the word “superstition” he intended to refer to a tenacious cult, an inviolable reverence to a superior cause, and the postponement of any human interest in this cause, and if by “religion” he wanted to signify a *lesbia* rule,<sup>311</sup> which was fixed and yet pliant to every human occurrence, then no doubt he did not wander far from impiety, calling religion superstition and atheism faith and devotion.

But that unhappy century was reduced to such depravation that adoration and reverence of the supreme celestial deity became the subject of satire and derision, as Juvenal states in Satire 14:

*Some who have had a father who reveres the Sabbath, worship nothing but the clouds, and the divinity of the heavens.*<sup>312</sup>

He included the clouds, just as the comedian Aristophanes imposed [them] on the highest philosopher, Socrates, who revered celestial and divine things. However, a lot can be pardoned of a poet, whose main purpose is to pretend, and of a professional satirist, whose main task is to lampoon. Of a great historian, however, nothing can be pardoned, for truth and fairness are his aims.

[70v] The seventh slander was to accuse the Jews of idleness and sloth because they solemnise the seventh day and likewise stop farming every seventh year: “*They say that they first chose to rest on the seventh day because that day ended their toils;*

<sup>308</sup> Exodus 20:17. Hebrew: שם האלוהים, אשר-אל-הערפל, ומשה ניגש אל-הערפל, אשר-אל-הערפל.

<sup>309</sup> Psalms 139:14. Hebrew: יודעת מאוד, ונפשי, נפלאים מעשיך.

<sup>310</sup> Tacitus, *Histories* V:13.

<sup>311</sup> Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* V:10 (1137b29–33): “For when the thing is indefinite the rule also is indefinite, like the lead rule used in making the Lesbian moulding; the rule adapts itself to the shape of the stone and is not rigid, and so too the decree is adapted to the fact.”

<sup>312</sup> Juvenal, *Satires* XIV:96–97.

*dein blandiente inertia septimum quoque annum ignaviae datum*, et il sudetto Iuvenale:

*Sed pater in causa, cui septima quaeque fuit lux  
ignava, et partem vitae non attigit ullam.*

Disputando con un gentile non occorre portarli ragioni de quali egli vuole esserne incapace, come de creatione di mondo, e liberatione miracolosa d'Egitto, ma bene dico che politicamente li doveva sovvenire essendo lui sì gran maestro di ragion di Stato molte cause di tali institutti.

Prima se li dice che non fu altrimenti dedicato il settimo giorno ad un turpe otio, ma sì bene al riposo del corpo, per potere in quel tempo con maggiore commodità essercitare l'animo del popolo nelle contemplationi, conforme il detto di Scipione Africano referito da Cicerone, *nunquam se minus otiosum esse, quam cum otiosus*, oltra che essendo sei giorni destinati ad affari proprii e privati, era convenevole ch'il settimo fosse dedicato al publico servitio. Ma di più ancora essendo all'huomo naturale la quiete, et avido di moderati piaceri e recreationi, quando non li fosse stato appartato in breve giro <de> uno giorno per il riposo, in tutto il tempo della sua vita, sarebbonsi mescolati [71r] l'otio con il negotio, e l'occupationi con li piaceri, et in tal modo divenivano turbati tutti gli offitii della vita civile. E la Scrittura acennò tal ragione con dire, Exodo capitolo 32 *sex diebus facietis opus, in die septimo sabbatum est*,<sup>68</sup> e gli Romani istessi con più apparente scandolo, ma però con politica prudenza dedicorono alcuni giorni dell'anno al publico lusso e dissolutione, come li giorni saturnali, e baccanali, havendo fatto de tempi quello ch'in molte città usarono far de lochi, deputandone alcuni di loro a publici prostibuli, acciocchè il resto della città restasse affatto netta e purgata, riducendosi quasi in lorda cloaca ogni immonditia, e infame obscenità. Et Oratio in tal proposito disse:

*Quidam notus homo cum exiret fornice, "macte  
Virtute esto" inquit, sententia dia Catonis:  
"Nam simul ac venas inflavit taetra libido,  
huc iuvenes aequum est descendere, non alienas  
permolere uxores.*

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<sup>68</sup> Exodus 31:15: "Sex diebus facietis opus: in die septimo sabbatum est."

but after a time they were led by the charms of indolence to give over the seventh year as well to inactivity.”<sup>313</sup> The aforementioned Juvenal [writes]:

*For all which the father was to blame, who gave up every seventh day to idleness, keeping it apart from all the concerns of life.*<sup>314</sup>

When arguing with a Gentile, it is not necessary to give reasons he does not want to understand, as is the case with the creation of the world and the miraculous liberation from Egypt. But, I say, on the contrary, since he is such a great master of reason of state, he should remember the many causes of these institutions.

First, one must answer that the seventh day is not dedicated to vile idleness, but to bodily repose, so that the people could devote themselves to contemplation with greater ease. The saying of Scipio Africanus, as reported by Cicero, is consistent with this: “*He was never less idle than when he had nothing to do.*”<sup>315</sup> Besides the fact that six days are destined for one’s own private affairs, it is suitable that the seventh be dedicated to public service. Furthermore, since quiet is natural to man, as is his eagerness for moderate pleasures and recreation, without a day set aside for rest, idleness [71r] would be mixed with commerce, and business with pleasure, all life long. And in such a way, all the offices of civil life would be troubled. Scripture highlights this reasoning in Exodus, chapter 32, where it is stated: “*Six days shall you work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath.*”<sup>316</sup> The Romans themselves, with more evident scandal, but with political prudence nonetheless, dedicated some days each year to public luxury and debauchery, such as the festivities of Saturn and Bacchus.<sup>317</sup> In so doing, they did with time what they had already done with public places when they set some of the latter apart in order to turn them into public houses of prostitution. As a result, the rest of the city then remained completely clean and purged, as if they wanted to direct almost all refuse and vile obscenity into one filthy sewer. On this subject, Horace stated:

*When from such a place a man he knew was coming forth, “A blessing on thy well-doing!” runs Cato’s revered utterance; “for when shameful passion has swelled the veins, ‘tis well that young men come down hither, rather than tamper with other men’s wives.”*<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> Tacitus, *Histories* V:4.

<sup>314</sup> Juvenal, *Satires* XIV:105–6.

<sup>315</sup> Cicero, *On Duties* III:1.

<sup>316</sup> Hebrew: וַיַּעַשׂ מְלָאכָה, וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שָׁבַת. In fact, the verse is in chapter 31 of Exodus. It is probably only a misprint. However, it is not possible to prove this since we do not have the manuscript of these considerations.

<sup>317</sup> *Saturnalia* and *Bacchanalia*.

<sup>318</sup> Horace, *Satires* I:2,31–35.

Così ancora conpartirono alcuna portione dell'anno a piaceri e lussi, acciocché parte del corso annuale per l'aspettatione della prossima dissolutione, et altra per la satietà e nausea della passata licentiosa vita restassero affatto purgate e mondificate. Per il che non doveva parere a Tacito educato negl'instituti romani tanto strano che gli Hebrei ogni settimo giorno riposavano, havendo gli altri sei giorni occupati in travagliarsi per li sovenimenti della vita.

Ma in proposito del sabbato non posso far di non advertire nel maggior [71v] huomo di potenza, e grandezza che giamai fu al mondo quanto poco informato fosse ancor lui al par di Tacito de riti hebraici. Cesare Augusto scrivendo a Tiberio il governo della sua vita, secondo che riferisce Svetonio, li narra, *ne Iudaeus quidem, mi Tiberi, tam diligenter sabbatis ieiunium servat quam ego hodie servavi*. Ma quanto sia falso che gli Hebrei digiunavano il sabbato, si può comprendere che giamai in alcuno de loro rituarii si trova tal osservanza, anzi che nell'Exodo riferisce la Scrittura ch'il giorno sesto cadeva doppia misura di manna per supplire al bisogno del popolo nel settimo, che cessava tal influxo. Et una sol volta fu ordinato da Moise il digiunare ch'occorreva alli dieci di settembre in circa, et è certo che le parole d'Augusto non si possono riferire a quel giorno particolare dicendo *tam diligenter sabbatis ieiunium servat*, che s'intende per li sabbati ordinarii. Dal che si può giudicare in quanta tenebre appresso l'altre nationi furono sempre involti li riti e costumi degli Hebrei. Il che procedeva per esser separati totalmente di religione, lingua, cibi, e commercii carnali et in niuna cosa quasi comunicanti, onde non solo li sopra nominati, ma tutti quelli che di loro fecero mentione, come, Giustino, Strabone, et Appiano, tanto dal vero si discostarono.

In quanto poi alla tassa dell'inertia, et accidia [72r]<sup>69</sup> del settimo anno apostogli da Tacito, si mostrò anco in ciò non solo poco pratico de riti hebraici, ma quasi imperito delle cose naturali. È la Giudea regione alquanto meridionale di rade piogge, né favorita dal Giordano che l'innondi come l'Egitto dal suo Nilo, de suolo alpestre e non ubertoso, di modo ch'affaticandolo continuamente, agevolmente esalta la sua virtù, a guisa d'animale, che troppo essercitandosi s'infiachisse, et al fine s'inaninisse. E perciò li fu provisto dal Divino Legislatore ch'ogni settimo anno si cesasse dagli uffitii dell'agricoltura lasciando riposare la terra acciocché ristorandosi, potesse di nuovo con maggior provento corrispondere alli desiderii di lavoratori. E la Scrittura istessa esprime questa ragione, e li nostri agricoltori costumano almeno con il variar le semenze alleggerirla alquanto, e moderare le sue fatiche, onde Virgilio nella Georgica conclude:

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69 Nella stampa dell'Angelica la paginatura è errata e riporta qui 74 anziché 72.

In the same way, they also set aside a part of the year for pleasures and luxuries. In this way, a portion of the year was set aside for awaiting the next debauchery to come, and the other part was set aside for satiety and nausea from the past licentious life. In this way, both portions of the year remained absolutely purged and purified. For this reason, the Jews' resting every seventh day should not have appeared so strange to Tacitus, who had been educated in Roman institutions, particularly since the Jews used to pass the other six days busy in providing for their daily life.

With regard to the Sabbath, I cannot refrain from pointing out that the greatest [71v] man in power and prominence that ever walked the earth was as poorly informed about Jewish rites as Tacitus. When Caesar Augustus wrote to Tiberius about ways of governing his life, according to Suetonius, he told him: "*Not even a Jew, my dear Tiberius, fasts so scrupulously on his sabbaths as I have to-day.*"<sup>319</sup> But how false it is that the Jews fasted on the Sabbath; one can understand this by pointing out that never, in any of their rituals, does one find such an observance. On the contrary, in Exodus, the Scripture narrates how on the sixth day a double measure of manna fell in order to supply the needs of the people on the seventh day, when it ceased to fall. Moses ordered a fast on one occasion only, which occurred on approximately the tenth of September. And it is certain that the words of Augustus cannot possibly refer to that particular day, since, he states, he "*fasts so scrupulously on his sabbaths,*" by which he meant an ordinary Sabbath. From this, one can see how great the darkness that surrounded the rites and customs of the Jews was for the other nations. This darkness stemmed from the complete separation of the Jews in terms of religion, language, foods, and carnal relations, and in almost nothing were they communicants. This occurred not only with the above-mentioned [Caesar Augustus and Tacitus], but also with others such as Justin, Strabo, and Ap-pian, all of whom wandered far from the truth.

With regard, then, to the slander about the idleness and sloth [72r] of the seventh year, once again he [Tacitus] proved himself to be not only poorly acquainted with Jewish rites, but also almost [as if he were] deprived of knowledge of natural things. Judea is quite a southern region, where it barely rains. In addition, the Jordan does not supply the area with floods, like the Nile does for Egypt. [The area has] mountainous and infertile soil, such that continually straining it easily destroys its virtue – like an animal that works so hard that it becomes weak and, ultimately, lifeless. Thus, it was arranged by the Divine Legislator that every seventh year they stopped farming and allowed the earth to rest, restoring it and making it able to meet the desires of those who would work it once again with even greater proceeds. The Scripture itself gives this reason. Our farmers are accustomed to at least varying the seeds to relieve the land somewhat and to moderate its fatigue. As Virgil concludes in his *Georgics*:

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319 Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars*, "The Deified Augustus" II:76.



*Sic quoque mutatis requiescunt fetibus arva,  
nec nulla interea est inaratae gratia terrae.*

Seconda ragione, essendo nel settimo anno comune a tutto il popolo li beni della terra, godeva una certa comunità d'haveri tanto dalla plebe, e gente tenue ambita, e desiderata, e quello ordinariamente non si poteva tollerare nel Stato politico per la ragione esplicata da Cicerone. *Capitalis omnino oratio est, [72v] ad aequationem bonorum pertinens; qua peste quae potest esse maior? Hanc enim ob causam maxime, ut sua tenerentur, res publicae civitatesque constitutae sunt. Nam etsi duce natura congregabantur homines, tamen spe custodiae rerum suarum urbium praesidia quae-rebant.* Dalla Legge mosaica almeno in ogni settimo anno fu concesso al popolo minuto assaggiare questo tanto loro desiderato bene, e così si veniva a temperare con certa armonia la comunità de beni, cosa tanto celebrata da Socrate e Platone politici teorici, con la proprietà e possesso particolare da Aristotele e Cicerone, statisti pratici, oltra modo celebrata. E perciò li loro beni come in certo modo comuni, erano dall'universale diffesi, e come spetiali con accurato riguardo da padroni custoditi, e governati, ché perciò anco fu instituito, che nell'istesso anno non si poteva esigere da alcuno la satisfazione de suoi debiti.

Terza ragione fu a mio credere che non essendo in quelli tempi nel popolo hebreo distinta la gente di guerra dal comune del popolo come tante volte s'osserva nella Scrittura, e che gli agricoltori erano il corpo della militia, scelta la migliore che si possa desiderare, conforme il parere di Vegetio, era convenevole ch'almeno ogni settimo anno cessando dall'agricoltura si adunassero per riconoscersi e disciplinarsi, overo anco dovendo dar opera ad alcuna espeditione militare in tempo a tutti otioso e vacante.

**[73r]** Questi sono motivi, e cause di tali precetti, che ad ogni sincero giuditio ben in estremo politico, doverebbono bastare per diffendere la Legge antica di tanta inertia, et accidia imputatole da Tacito. Dalle cose antedette il cortese lettore s'altro frutto non havesse ricevuto ch'il conoscere la semplice autorità degli huomini grandi non esser il vero cimento della verità li dovrebbe esser grato tal diceria, conoscendo che quelli auttori, che in una materia furono accuratissimi, in altra possono essere transcuratissimi, e ch'alla bugia l'istessa verità gli è pertugiata per potervisi in lei insinuare, e siccome nelle altre nostre applicationi

*Thus also, with change of crop, the land finds rest, and meanwhile not thankless is the unploughed earth.*<sup>320</sup>

The second reason is the fact that in the seventh year the goods of the earth become the common property of the entire people. Therefore, the common people and the poor could enjoy this sharing of goods as long as they desired and aspired to do so. This could not be tolerated in the political state, because, as Cicero explains: “*That speech deserves unqualified [72v] condemnation, for it favoured an equal distribution of property; and what more ruinous policy than that could be conceived? For the chief purpose in the establishment of constitutional state and municipal governments was that individual property rights might be secured. For, although it was by Nature’s guidance that men were drawn together into communities, it was in the hope of safeguarding their possessions that they sought the protection of cities.*”<sup>321</sup> At least every seventh year, Mosaic Law allowed the lowly people to taste that which they so desired. Thus, the community of goods was somehow harmoniously tempered with ownership and particular possession; the former being celebrated greatly by Socrates and Plato, political theoreticians, the latter being praised above all things by Aristotle and Cicero, practical statesmen. Accordingly, their [i.e., the Jews’] goods were, in some way, common, and they were defended by the entire people and guarded and carefully looked after by the owners as something special. This also led to the institution of the rule that in that year, no one could demand the repayment of his debts.

The third reason was, I believe, that in those times people of war were not distinct from commoners among the Jewish people; as is often observed in the Scripture, farmers made up the army corps. This was the best option one could ever choose, consistent with the view of *Vegezio*.<sup>322</sup> Therefore, it was appropriate for these men to cease farming at least every seventh year and to assemble in order to recognise each other and to be disciplined. For they also had to carry out several military expeditions in a period that was idle and vacant for everyone.

[73r] These are the reasons for and causes of such precepts, which, to every sincere judgment that might be political in the slightest degree, should suffice to defend the ancient Law from the claims of inactivity and sloth attributed by Tacitus. If the courteous reader has gained nothing from the aforementioned matters other than the knowledge that the simple authority of great men is not the real cement of truth, then he should be thankful for what has been said. For he knows now that those authors who were most accurate on one subject could be extremely negligent with respect to another, and that the same truth can be infiltrated by falsehood that tries to force its way into truth. And in the same way as in all other applications

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<sup>320</sup> Virgil, *Georgics* 1:82–83.

<sup>321</sup> Cicero, *On Duties* II:21,73.

<sup>322</sup> See Carolus Lang, *Flavii Vegetii Renati epitoma rei militaris* (Lipsiae: in aedibvs B.G. Tevbnieri, 1869), I:3.

è giovevole il *ne quid nimis* di Pittaco, nel prestar fede a scrittori ch'humanamente ci instruiscono, è sopra modo salutare, e proffittevole.

Pittacus's *ne quid nimis* ("nothing in excess") is advantageous,<sup>323</sup> it is above all healthy and profitable [when we are supposed] to lend faith to authors who instruct us while at the same time remaining within the limits of their human nature.

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**323** A Latin translation of the Greek saying μηδὲν ἄγαν, "nothing in excess," was engraved on the fronton of the temple of Apollo in Delphi.

## CONSIDERATIONE XVI

### *Circa l'applicatione de studii, e varie classi di dottori appresso gli Hebrei*

Qualunque popolo e nazione che consacrò la sua memoria alla sempiternità, vi aspirò con il mezzo dell'arme o dottrine. Li Greci s'immortalorono con l'inventione delle scientie, et arti più nobili, onde Oratio:

*Grais ingenium, Grais dedit ore rotundo  
Musa loqui, praeter laudem nullius avaris.*

E li Romani con li trionfi, et imperii.

**[73v]** La nazione hebrea mentre che fu protetta dalli favori divini, per l'una e l'altra professione fu celebre appresso tutte le genti a lei coetanee. In quanto al maneggio dell'arme famosi sono li racconti spiegati nella Sacra Scrittura, e narrationi di Gioseffo hebreo. Et è sopra modo osservabile ch'insino al tempo che già erano decaduti dalla Gratia Divina, et arrivarono all'orizzonte del loro dominio, mostrorono l'ultimo sforzo di valore e generosità, a guisa di lume che vicino all'estinguersi raddoppia la luce, et il baleno. Era già soggiogato il genere humano dalla romana potenza, eccetuatone quel poco di lui che l'intrattabilità del cielo, sterilità di terreno, e pericoloso tratto di mare diffendevano da sì molesta oppressione, solamente gli Hebrei portione insensibile rispetto alla moltitudine e numerosità d'altri popoli, presero l'armi per vendicare la loro libertà e diffendere la religione, et esposero le proprie vitte a voluntarii macelli Onde li valorosi imperatori, Vespesiano, e Tito, benché suffragati dal concorso de tutti gli huomini, sovvente dubitarono della vittoria.

Né meno furono gli Hebrei chiari et illustri, per l'essercitio delle lettere e scientie, poiché dal consenso universale gli è attribuito ch'appresso di loro hebbero li natali le più degne dottrine, e come Eusebio egregiamente nel Libro della Preparatione lo **[74r]** dimostra. E la Scrittura più volte celebra la nazione per la sapienza che per il valore dell'arme, Deuteronomio

## CONSIDERATION XVI

### *Regarding the Jews' Application to Their Studies and the Various Classes of Sages*

Whatever a people and a nation do to be remembered and to enjoy undying fame, they aspire to it either by means of arms or learning. The Greeks immortalised themselves with the invention of the noblest sciences and arts, whence Horace stated:

*To the Greeks the Muse gave native wit, to the Greeks  
she gave speech in well-rounded phrase.*<sup>324</sup>

And likewise the Romans with their victories and empires.<sup>325</sup>

**[73v]** While it was protected by divine patronage, the Jewish Nation was renowned among all contemporary peoples for its talent in both fields. With regard to its handling of arms, we can draw on the famous stories related in the Sacred Scripture and in the accounts of the Jewish Josephus. And it has been clearly observed that even when the Jews had fallen from divine grace and their [political] power was on the wane, they displayed extreme valour and greatness of spirit, like a fire which, as it is almost extinguished, doubles both its flame and the light it casts. Roman power had already subdued the human race, except that little part protected from such vexatious oppression by its intractable climate, sterile soil, and most dangerous sea coast; only the Jews, proportionally an imperceptible part if compared to the multitude and numbers of other peoples, took up arms to regain their liberty and defend their religion. They voluntarily gave themselves to violent slaughter. As a result, the courageous emperors Vespasian and Titus, despite being supported by the plenty of men, were often doubtful about their chances of victory.

Moreover, the Jews were no less renowned for their proficiency in the arts and sciences, since by universal consensus they had established the foundations of the most excellent teachings, as Eusebius **[74r]** demonstrates so sagaciously in the *Book of Preparation*.<sup>326</sup> The Scripture has unending praise for the erudition and knowledge of the Jewish Nation, as well as for its valour and skill with arms, as in Deuter-

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<sup>324</sup> Horace, *The Art of Poetry* 323–24.

<sup>325</sup> See Midrash Bereshit Rabbah 16:4: “R. Huna says: Greek rule was superior to this evil (Roman) one in three aspects: in [building of] a Temple [variant: in the form of government], in art [variant: the book sector] and in language.” For a contextualisation of the passage, see Giuseppe Veltri, *A Mirror of Rabbinic Hermeneutics: Studies in Religion, Magic, and Language Theory in Ancient Judaism* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 49–50. According to the Palestinian Talmud (Megillah 1:11 ed. Venezia), Greek is a poet’s language, while Latin is a soldier’s language.

<sup>326</sup> Eusebius, *Evangelical Preparation* X:1–11.

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**Note:** In this consideration we are following Ravid’s translation (*Economics*, 20).

*haec est enim sapientia vestra, et intellectus coram populos, ut audientes universa praecepta haec, dicant en populus sapiens, et intelligens,*<sup>70</sup> ma dopo che convenendoli cedere al divino decreto furono soggiogati da Romani, distrutto il Tempio, invasa la città, oppressa la religione, captivato e disperso il popolo, non solamente hanno perduto affatto ogni militar gloria, invilitosi et infiaccatosi affatto d'animo, ma anco quasi s'estinse in loro ogni lume di sapere, e si oscurò qualunque splendore di eruditione, poiché vogliono le virtù essere accompagnate e trattenute dalli agi e comodità della vita.

Maggior discapito e crollo fu questo ch'il primo, ché sebbene il decadere dalla reputatione militare cagiona la soggettione e l'obedienza, nulla di meno non ne risulta però il perdere affatto l'honore e la gloria de popoli benché ad altrui siano ossequenti: rare sono le città affatto dominanti, infinite le soggette che tuttavia risplende in loro fulgenti raggi di virtù.

La Grecia benché sotto posta a Romani mentre che fioriva de dottrine fu celebratissima, tanto che a suo arbitrio formava quelli animi che li dovevano poi dar leggi, e per tal causa si rendeva dubbioso se li Romani soggiogarono li Greci con la violenza et imperio, ovvero questi quelli, [74v] poiché a loro modo li configuravano, et assestavano con l'infusione delle loro dottrine openioni, et impressioni de costumi. Ma dopo che inondando la barbarie furono privi de scientie, et egregie arti, riuscirono appresso il mondo ignoti e sconosciuti. E con gran giuditio li dottori christiani si stimarono più offesi da edditi di Giuliano imperatore havendogli impedito, et interdetto l'essercitio delle discipline, che di Nerone, Traiano, Diocletiano, e Massimino, che li perseguitarono con gli flagelli, martirii, et eccidii, conoscendo non esser cosa che più avvilisca l'animo humano, che l'inscitia et ignoranza.

Le guerre, le vittorie, senza li preconii, et encomii de litterati, non sono altro che strepiti e rumori, ma le lettere e dottrine riguardano all'eternità. In procinto d'incorrere in una totale ignoranza si ritrovarono gli Hebrei nella caduta del loro imperio, e nel progresso d'una così lunga e miserabile dispersione, quando che il stimolo dell'intelligenza della Scrittura gravida de recondite dottrine non l'avesse spronato ad alcuna mediocre applicatione d'intelligenza e curioso sapere. Et è notabile che siccome il zelo della propria religione li ratenne dall'impiego delle discepline humane per sospetto che la dissoluta curiosità non li

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<sup>70</sup> Deuteronomium 4:6: "Haec est enim vestra sapientia, et intellectus coram populis, ut audientes universa praecepta haec, dicant: En populus sapiens et intellegens, gens magna."

onomy: “*This is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, that, when they hear all these statutes, shall say: ‘Surely this is a wise and understanding people.’*”<sup>327</sup> However, soon after they were forced to yield to the divine decree and were subjugated by the Romans. The Temple was destroyed, the city invaded, religion downtrodden, the people taken captive and dispersed. [At that time,] not only had they completely lost all military glory, being entirely destitute of courage and enfeebled in spirit, but the light of knowledge was almost extinguished within them and the splendour of their erudition was dimmed, for virtues want to be accompanied and associated with leisure and the comforts of life.

This was more detrimental and a greater blow than the first [the military defeat], for even if the decline of military reputation causes subjection and obedience, it will not result in a complete loss of honour and glory for the people, even if they have to show deference to others. Cities endowed with unlimited power are rare; the subjected ones who nevertheless shine bright with rays of virtue are innumerable.

Greece, although subjected to the Romans while it flourished with erudition, was so distinguished that it moulded to its will those souls who later created its laws. Hence, it is questionable whether the Romans subjected the Greeks to violence and authority or the converse.<sup>328</sup> [74v] For [the Greeks] shaped their [Roman] education according to their philosophy, and formed Roman opinions and customs, infusing them with their learning. But after barbarism flooded them, they were deprived of knowledge and distinguished arts. Thus they lost their fame and were ignored by the world. Displaying great wisdom, the Christian sages considered the edicts of the Emperor Julian more offensive, since they prohibited the practice of the sciences,<sup>329</sup> than those of Nero, Trajan, Diocletian, and Maximinus Thrax, who had persecuted them with torture, martyrdom, and slaughter. In fact, they knew that nothing could debase the human spirit more than a lack of knowledge – or ignorance.

Wars and victories, without the acknowledgement and praise of men of letters, are nothing but noise and tumult; instead, letters and learning bestow eternity. Facing the collapse of their dominion – and in the course of a long and miserable dispersion – the Jews would have found themselves on the verge of falling into total ignorance had they lacked the stimulus provided by the Scripture. [In fact, it is] full of hidden doctrines,<sup>330</sup> which spurred them into some mediocre application of their intelligence and curiosity [in interpreting them]. It is thus worth noting that the zeal of their own religion restrained them from committing themselves to humanist branches of knowledge, because of the suspicion that unbridled curiosity might

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327 Hebrew: *כי היא חכמתכם ובינתכם, לעיני העמים: אשר ישמעון, את כל-החוקים האלה, ואמרו רק עם-חכם ונבון, הגוי הגדול הזה.*

328 See Horace, *Epistles* II:1,156–57.

329 See glossary.

330 The hidden doctrines are a proof that everything is in the Torah, Luzzatto is not polemical against religion.



conducesse ad alcuna erronea opinione, e prava assertione, così anco l'istesso zelo, et [75r] affetto gli indusse a non abbandonare affatto le scientie per rendersi capaci d'articoli della fede, et esposizione della Scrittura. Né saprei determinare se gli Hebrei hanno occasione di lamentarsi della conditione de tempi che gli ha privato per l'incomodi della vita di molteplicità de libri, e numerosità de autori, che con l'otio et agio a satietà ne abbonderebbono.

Molti incaricano il tempo esser edace consumatore del tutto, e massime delle fatiche de litterati, io piuttosto di lui ne reclamarei non come di rapace involatore, ma immoderato aggregatore alla pura e sincera antichità. Oppur si potrebbe assimigliarlo al mare ch'alcuni lochi della terra sommerge, et ingiotti, et ad altri con apportargli arenoso e paludoso terreno li rende inavigabili, et inaccessibili a vascelli, otturando li porti, et atterrando li recessi. Così il tempo la memoria d'alcune cose affatto consuma et abolisce, et altre in eccesso ha amplificato, et allargato con fimbrie, et appendici d'incredibilità e mendacità. E perseverando nell'esempio del mare, a proposito fu detto, che siccome quello le cose gravi sommerge, e le leggieri a galla sostiene, così anco il tempo opprime, et annichila le dottrine sode, e solo ci rapporta, e trasmette le di poco momento, e vane.

Ma per dire alcuna cosa de litterarie occupationi [75v] degli Hebrei in sì gran corso di tempo che la natione è captiva non essendone estinta affatto ogni scintilla, è da sapere ch'in tre classi principali si riducono li loro studii circa le Sacre Lettere. Prima di rabbini e talmudisti, seconda teologi filosofanti, terza cabalisti, e professori d'arcani.

lead them to erroneous opinions and wicked assertions. Likewise, that very same zeal [75r] and passion induced them not to entirely abandon the sciences that would enable them to understand the articles of the faith and the exposition of the Scripture. Nor can I state with certainty whether the Jews had occasion to regret the conditions of the times and the uncomfortable conditions of life that deprived them of a variety of books and a large number of authors which would have flourished in conditions of leisure and ease.<sup>331</sup>

Many accuse time of being a ravenous consumer of everything,<sup>332</sup> and especially of the hard work of men of letters. I would not call it such a rapacious thief, but rather regard it as something that unrestrainedly adds dead weight to pure and sincere antiquity. One could compare it to the sea, which submerges and engulfs some lands and brings sandy and marshy soil to others, rendering them unnavigable and inaccessible by sea, blocking the ports and silting up the recesses. In the same way, time completely erases the memory of some facts and amplifies others by embellishing them with ornaments and implausible and mendacious additions; continuing with the example of the sea, it has been said that just as it submerges heavy things and keeps light ones afloat, so time weighs down and destroys firm doctrines, transmitting only those that are less important and insubstantial.<sup>333</sup>

But [let me] say something about the literary activities [75v] of the Jews during the long period of the Nation's captivity, when not every spark (of knowledge) was completely extinguished. It is important to know that Jewish sages can be divided into three classes:<sup>334</sup> first, the rabbis and Talmudists; second, the philosophising<sup>335</sup> theologians; and third, the Kabbalists who profess mysteries.

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**331** On the decline of Jewish knowledge and on the loss of books addressed here, see Giuseppe Veltri, *Alienated Wisdom – Enquiry into Jewish Philosophy and Scepticism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), Chapter 3: “Between the ‘Theft’ and Genealogy of Knowledge: The Middle Ages,” 35–42, and the sources quoted there.

**332** See Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XV:234: “Tempus edax rerum”; id., *Ex Ponto* IV:10,7: “Tempus edax igitur praeter nos omnia perdit.”

**333** See Bacon, *The New Organon*, 8: “The result is that Time like a river has brought down to us the light things that float on the surface, and has sunk what is weighty and solid.” See also Luzzatto's *Socrates*, 349: “L'acqua parimente sostenendo il lieve e somergendo il ponderoso, ci arreca notabile documento, che gli ingegni gravi e constanti amici della sincera verità, dalla flutazione del mondo sovente sono tirati al basso e s'affogano, ma li sventati et aerii non di rado emergendo, al sommo delle cose sono portati e sollevati, avanzandosi li homini, più con l'apparente, che con l'essenziale.”

**334** The division of the Jewish sages into three classes appears in Josephus, *The Jewish War* II:119: “Jewish philosophy, in fact, takes three forms. The followers of the first school are called Pharisees, of the second Sadducees, of the third Essenes.” Yet the most probable source of this division is Profiat Duran, who lists three intellectual groups of the Iberian Jewish society in his *Ma'aseh Efod*: Talmudists, philosophers, and kabbalists. Accordingly, see Maud Kozodoy, “No Perpetual Enemies: Maimonideanism at the Beginning of the Fifteenth Century,” in *The Cultures of Maimonideanism: New Approaches to the History of Jewish Thought*, ed. James T. Robinson (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 160–61.

**335** See Veltri, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 30–33.

Rabbini appresso gli Hebrei sono quelli che s'attribuiscono avere le tradizioni del modo d'osservare, et essequire li riti contenuti nella Legge, che per gran corso d'anni si confermò vocalmente, dal tempo della legislatione infino l'età d'Antonino imperatore, ch'allhora ne furono composti da un Rabbi Giudà celebratissimo huomo de quelli tempi aforismi e trattati. Dicono essi rabbini la Scrittura in molti lochi esser tanto oscura e concisa, ch'è impossibile con humane congettture indovinarne il vero e germano sentimento, ché perciò non è credibile che il prudentissimo Legislatore abbandonasse tanta dubbiosa interpretatione all'arbitrio e temerario placido<sup>71</sup> di cadauno, ma ben è ragionevole che rivelasse l'espositione alli più eletti et a lui famigliari, accioché successivamente in ogni tempo la comunicassero alla posterità.

Come per esempio la Scrittura instituisce la festività del sabbato, che deve principiare al tramontare del Sole nel sesto giorno operativo, né dichiara a qual orizzonte della Terra **[76r]** delve cominciarsi, essendo tuttavia infiniti li orizzonti, restandoci ignoto per il litterale della Scrittura qual loco deve essere il primo a solennizzare tal festa e qual seguire. Di più commette l'osservanza d'alcune feste a giorni limitati del mese, et a stagione determinata dell'anno non esplicando se 'l mese è computato dal partirsi della Luna d'un loco del Zodiaco al suo ritorno a detto loco dalli astrologi circuito periodico appellato, overo da una congiuntione della Luna con il Sole all'altra successiva, oppure d'una apparenza dopo l'haversi la Luna sviluppata da raggi solari insino alla seconda apparenza dopo l'haversi affatto

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<sup>71</sup> Qui per "placito", cfr. Romano Luperini e Pietro Cataldi, *La scrittura e l'interpretazione: storia della letteratura italiana nel quadro della civiltà e della letteratura dell'Occidente* (Palumbo, 1999), vol. I, 34: "La parola "placito" viene dal latino placitum (= 'ciò che è piaciuto'); nel linguaggio giuridico è 'ciò che è piaciuto al giudice', cioè la sentenza emessa per scritto a conclusione di un processo."

According to the Jews, the rabbis are those who claim to possess knowledge of traditions about the observance and performance of the rites contained in the Law. These [traditions] were preserved orally for a great number of years, from the time of the legislation [at Sinai] until the period of the Emperor Antoninus. Then Rabbi Yehudah,<sup>336</sup> a most famous man of those times, arranged and put them into writing in aphorisms and tractates. Those rabbis say that in many places, the Scripture is so obscure that it is impossible to guess its true and genuine meaning with human conjectures. It is, therefore, not credible that the most prudent Legislator would have left its dubious interpretation to the arbitrary decision or rash judgment of some individuals. Instead, it is much more likely that he revealed the explanation to those he acknowledged as the noblest and closest to him, so that they could afterwards transmit it to future generations and continue to do so forevermore.

For example, [the Scripture] institutes the holiday of Sabbath, which is to commence at sunset on the sixth working day, but it does not state which horizon of the earth [76r] should be used to fix the exact moment. Since, furthermore, the horizons of the earth cannot be counted, we remain ignorant of which place should be the first to celebrate that holiday and which should follow, at least according to the literal meaning of the Scripture. It also assigns the observance of some holidays to specific days of the month and to determined seasons of the year. Yet it does not explain whether the month is to be calculated from the departure of the moon from one part of the Zodiac until its return to that place, which astrologers<sup>337</sup> call a periodical circuit.<sup>338</sup> Or [is it to be calculated] from one conjunction of the moon with the sun until the next?<sup>339</sup> Or even from the moon's appearance, after it has developed from the rays of the sun, until the second appearance, after having entirely

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**336** The "friendship" between Yehudah ha-Nasi and Emperor Antoninus is narrated in many Mid-rashic and Talmudic passages. For an anthology of these passages and sources in English, see Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, ed., *Rabbinic Stories* (New York: Paulist Press, 2002), 163–68.

**337** Luzzatto uses both words, "astrologers" and "astronomers," without making a clear distinction between them.

**338** Lattes translates this with *mo'ed* (Lattes, *Ma'amar*, 140).

**339** See Sacha Stern, *Calendars and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendar 2nd Century BCE – 10th Century CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 100: "'Conjunction' is the moment when the moon, along its orbit, passes between the sun and the earth." Ibid., 101: "By convention, the ('true') conjunction has always been calculated by ancient and modern astronomers as the moment when moon and sun are at the same (geocentric) ecliptic longitude."

perduto il lume per la sua congiunzione con il Sole, e se in questo terzo modo, ancora v'è da dubitare rispetto a qual clima conviene terminare tal apparenza oltre altre dubbietà ch'in tal proposito occorrono.

Così parimente circa la diffinitione dell'anno non mancano la perplessità, primieramente s'è composto di dodeci lunationi come osservano oggidì li settatori di Mahometto difettoso d'undeci giorni in circa dal circuito solare, oppure se termina con il giro e ritorno del Sole all'istesso punto del Zodiaco. Il che non manca ancora delle difficoltà per le varie openioni de astronomi, essendo ineguale appresso loro la misura dell'anno solare di Tolomeo, da quello d'Albetano arabo, e questo [76v] discorde dal computo copernicano e d'altri moderni per cagione delle precessioni d'equinotii e d'altre varietà. Et anco quando fosse conforme al giro del Sole vi nasce dubbio se vi si deve mescolare il lunare, costituendo il mese intercalare ogni tre anni, come osservano oggidì gli Hebrei ovvero ogni otto anni come una volta usavano li Romani.

E se il giro e periodo nel qual tornavano gli anni all'istesso modo fosse ogni 19 anni come usano hora gli Hebrei componendolo di 12 anni lunari difettosi, e 7 intercalari accresciuti, e sebbene vi resta varietà d'un'hora, tornano a stabilire li giorni festivi, come nel primo giro, ovvero come li Romani, che difenivano tal circuito d'anni diminutti, et intercalari nel periodo d'anni 24, onde Livio trattando di Numa, libro primo, Deca prima, *atque omnium primum ad cursum lunae in duodecim menses describit annum; quem quia tricenos dies singulis mensibus luna non explet, desuntque dies solido anno qui solstitiali circumagitur orbe, intercalariis mensibus interponendis ita dispensavit, ut vicesimo anno ad metam eandem solis, unde orsi essent plenae omnium annorum spatiis, dies congruerent*, oltre tanti altri modi e maniere di

lost the light because of its conjunction with the sun?<sup>340</sup> And if [it is to be calculated] in this third way, the zone that determines such an appearance remains unclear, along with other doubts that occur in this connection.

So too, regarding the determination of the year, there is no lack of perplexity, first about whether it is composed of twelve lunar months, as the followers of Mohammed observe it today, thus falling eleven days short of the solar circuit. A further doubt is raised about the year ending with the orbiting and return of the sun to the same point of the Zodiac. This suggestion is problematic, since the astronomers hold various opinions. According to them, Ptolemy's measure of the solar year is different from that of the Arab Albatanus.<sup>341</sup> The latter [76v] differs from the computation of Copernicus and other modern astronomers because of the axial precession, equinoxes, and other divergences. Moreover, even if [the year were calculated] according to the circuit of the sun, doubts arise regarding whether one should include the lunar year, creating the intercalated month every three years, as the Jews do today, or every eight years, as the Romans used to do.

[Doubts also arise about] whether the period in which the years recurred in the same order would be every 19 years, as is the custom for the Jews, who divide this period into 12 defective lunar years and 7 increased leap years. And even though a variation of one hour remains, they [the Jews] continue establishing the festive days, as [one does] in the first circuit, or as the Romans [used to arrange them]. In fact, the Romans determined this circuit of diminished and leap years as a period of 24 years. Thus, Livy, dealing with Numa in book one, first decade, wrote: "*And first of all he divided the year into twelve months, according to the revolutions of the moon. But since the moon does not give months of quite thirty days each, and eleven days are wanting to the full complement of a year as marked by the sun's revolution, he inserted intercalary months in such a way that in the twentieth year the days should fall in with the same position of the sun from which they had started, and the period of twenty years be rounded out.*"<sup>342</sup> Besides this method, there are many other ways

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**340** Ibid., 103: "The rabbinic calendar was originally based on the appearance of the new moon, which involved a procedure of observation...; and that later, it was replaced with a calculated calendar, based on the mean conjunction (or *molad*).<sup>341</sup> Ibid., 113: "From the Hasmonaean period to the third century CE, non-rabbinic sources suggest that most Jewish lunar calendars were based on the appearance and sighting of the new moon." Among the non-Jewish sources, Stern lists Josephus and Philo, both of them known to Luzzatto. In the Mishna, the months begin at the first sighting of the new moon (ibid., 157). This system is acknowledged until the end of the Amoraic period in the fifth century (ibid., 164). Ibid., 170: "By the later Amoraic period, a fixed calendar was introduced." For the outlines of the present-day rabbinic calendar, see ibid., 191–93.

**341** See glossary. See also John M. Steele, *Ancient Astronomical Observations and the Study of the Moon's Motion (1691–1757)* (New York: Springer, 2012), 66.

**342** Livy, *From the Founding of the City* 1:19,6. This is probably an indirect quote taken from Scaliger. Josephus Scaligerus, *Opus de Emendatione Temporum Hac postrema Editione, ex Autoris ipsius manuscript emendatius, magnâque accessione auctius. Addita Veturum Graecorum Fragmenta Selecta* (Coloniae Allobrogum: Typis Roverianis, 1629), 181.

terminarlo, registrate nel curioso e faticoso libro del dotto Scaligero intitolato *De emendatione temporum*. Per il che dicono li rabbini esser ragionevole che Moise con vocale traditione tutte le scrupolosità e dubbietà terminasse.

E l'istessa circoncisione rito tanto [77r] solenne degli Hebrei non fu giamai dichiarato nella Scrittura circa qual membro e parte del nostro corpo si dovesse eseguire, ch'anco l'orecchia fu appellata dalli Profeti incirconcisa: Ieremia 6 *Ecce incircumcisae aures eorum, et audire non possunt*,<sup>72</sup> et altrove in molti lochi. Per il che è credibile che fosse rimesso alla traditione e consuetudine.

Di più si può addurre a loro favore, ch'essendo la lingua hebraica priva di lettere vocali servendosi in loro vece d'alcuni punti soggiacenti alle consonanti, et essendone stata priva la Scrittura migliara d'anni dal tempo di Moise Legislatore insino dopo l'età del dottissimo traduttore della Scrittura, che continuò senza la connessione de punti, come attesta l'istesso traduttore, conviene necessariamente confessare, che per sì gran intervallo di tempo per cagione della traditione si conservasse corretta e castigata la lettura della Sacra Scrittura. E per corroborare questa loro openione dicono che li quaranta giorni che dupplicatamente dimorò Moise nel monte Sinai nel tempo della legislatione non fu solo per elaborare li due tavole del Decalogo, ma per apprendere le sudette traditioni, a quali ancora dicono doversi riferire le tante reiterate implorationi de profeti, et in particolare del Salmista nel Salmo 119 che fu per l'apprensione, et intelligenza [77v] della Scrittura, cioè delle traditioni interpretative della Legge.

Molte altre ragioni sono apportate da detti rabbini, che non voglio in ciò più dimorare. A questi dottori l'universale degli Hebrei in ogni loco e tempo hanno prestatato assenso puntuale in quello appartiene alla essecutione de riti, e precetti, e massime cerimoniali, ch'essendo osservazioni sensibili e patenti, e che non ricevono alteratione per varietà de tempi, con ogni fede credono, che li detti rabbini gli habbiano riferito, e rapportato quello che oculatamente hanno veduto da loro maggiori effettivamente eseguire, reputandogli semplici, e veraci relatori, e narratori dell'antichità.

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72 Ieremiae 6:10: "Ecce incircumcisae aures eorum, et audire non possunt."

to end the circuit anew, as related in the curious and arduous book *De Emendatione Temporum* by the eminent scholar Joseph Justus Scaliger. So the rabbis say that due to the diversity of written opinions, it is reasonable to say that Moses ended all doubts by resorting to oral tradition.

Even concerning circumcision, such a solemn rite [77r] for the Jews, it was never elucidated in the Scripture on which member and part of our body it should be executed, for the ear was also termed uncircumcised by the prophet Jeremiah: “Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot listen,”<sup>343</sup> as well as in many other passages of the Bible. It is thus credible that this was also left to tradition and custom.<sup>344</sup>

One can bring a further argument in favour of the rabbis, namely that the Hebrew language is written without vowels, which are substituted by dots underneath the consonants. The Scripture has been read without those dots for thousands of years, from the time of the legislator Moses until after the age of the most learned translator of the Scripture,<sup>345</sup> when it was still lacking the connection of points, as that same translator attests. It is therefore necessary to admit that for a long period of time, thanks to the tradition [preserved by the rabbis], the text of the Sacred Scripture remained correct and without error. And to corroborate this opinion of theirs, [the rabbis] say that Moses dwelled twice on Mount Sinai at the time of the legislation. He did this not only to elaborate the two tablets of the Decalogue, but also to learn the above-mentioned traditions.<sup>346</sup> Furthermore, they say that the often-reiterated statements of the prophets – and in particular of the Psalmist in Psalm 119 – that ask for an acquisition of knowledge and understanding [77v] of the Scripture, that is, with regard to the interpretive traditions of the law, are referring to these [traditions].

Many other reasons were put forward by the above-mentioned rabbis, but I do not wish to dwell on them any further. All Jews assented to these sages in every place and at all times, strictly following their instruction as to the fulfilment of rites and precepts, and especially ceremonials. For these observances are based on immediate visual perceptions and are therefore evident and not subject to change over the course of time. Thus the Jews deeply believe what these rabbis report about what they carefully observed with their own eyes as being carried out by their ancestors. In fact, the Jews believe the rabbis to be the trustworthy and sincere reporters of the rites and ceremonies executed in ancient times.

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343 Hebrew: הנה ערלה אוזנם, ולא יוכלו להקשיב.

344 However, the biblical text seems rather clear on this point in Genesis 17:11: “And ye shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin.”

345 It is most likely that Luzzatto is referring to Jerome, the translator *par excellence* of the Latin Bible. According to Dante Lattes (170 n. 181), Luzzatto is here referring to Jerome’s *Prologus Galeatus* (*The Helmeted Preface*).

346 According to rabbinical tradition, while he was on Sinai Moses received the written Law as well as the oral one (Mishnah, Avot 1:1–3). Modern scholarship considers the oral Law a development parallel to the written Law. Oral Law was established during the Talmudic period (first to seventh century CE). See Herman L. Strack and Gunter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).



Segue la seconda classe di theologi adottrinati, ovvero filosofanti che li vogliamo appellare, e furono quelli ch'accompagnando la ragione humana con l'auttorità della Parola Divina, con armonioso concerto hanno procurato d' esporre la Scrittura, fra quali si può annoverare due chiarissimi huomini che fiorirono nella natione nel tempo ch'ancora riteneva alcuna forma di libertà.

Il primo de quali fu Filone Alessandrino, che visse innanzi la destruttione de Hierusalem al tempo di Caio Caligola al quale fu destinato dagli Hebrei ambasciatore, e si risserba ancora la relatione della sua legatione, e di lui ne fa Gioseffo nel sesto *De bello giudaico* [78r] honorevole nominanza, huomo non solo di mirabile eruditione nella lingua greca, ma d'incomparabile dottrina sì humana come divina, nell' esporre la Scrittura inclinò a sensi allegorici accompagnandovi concetti filosofici, naturali, morali, e politici. La sua maniera d'esplicatione fu seguita da Origene dottissimo fra Christiani, e parimente allessandrino, e non è credibile che s'alienasse assolutamente dal senso litterale, et historico, ma ciò fece per allettare, et addolcire gli animi de Greci, a quali indirizzava le sue fatiche, e per tal cagione ancora si è valuto piuttosto della traduttione de Settanta, che del testo hebreo, benché in alcune cose quella traduttione dall'hebraico deviasse. E ciò fece per assestarsi, e confermarsi all'umore de detti Greci. Le sue opere sono state tradotte dal greco nel latino, né giamai trapassarono ancora nel hebraico, e s'egli avesse piuttosto applicato l'animo ad erudire gli Hebrei ch'a convertire li Greci, forse haverebbe raccolto maggior frutto delle sue fatiche, ch'haverebbe illustrato la natione con maggior applauso, che con Greci non conseguì, ritrovando li suoi di già disposti all'apprensione della sua dottrina.

Il secondo autore fu Gioseffo sacerdote, celebre e prudentissimo historico, che nelli libri intitolati l'*Antichità Giudaica*, non pochi lumi apportò a molti lochi della Scrittura, e [78v] parimente li pubblicò in idioma greca. Dopo questi due preclari huomini non si trovano altri della nostra natione ch'habbiano lasciato loro monumenti in lingua greca, ovvero latina.

There follows the second class of learned theologians, or philosophers, as we may want to call them. These are those who, by joining human reason with the authority of the divine word, have endeavoured to expound upon Scripture with a harmonious application of both. Among them, we can include two exceedingly famous men who flourished at a time when the Nation still retained some form of liberty.

The first is Philo of Alexandria, who lived before the destruction of Jerusalem, during the time of Gaius Caligula. He was sent to that [ruler] by the Jews as an ambassador, and the account of his legation is available to us to this day.<sup>347</sup> Philo is honourably mentioned by Josephus in the sixth (book) of *The Jewish War*.<sup>348</sup> [78r] He was a man not only of remarkable erudition in the Greek language, but also of incomparable learning in human as well as divine doctrines. In expounding Scripture, he appealed to the allegorical meanings connected to philosophical, natural, moral, and political concepts. His manner of explication was followed by Origen, most learned among the Christians and likewise an Alexandrian. It is not credible, however, that his [i.e., Philo's] interpretation would have completely departed from the literal and historical sense of the text. He obviously did this to appease the minds of the Greeks, to whom he directed his labours.<sup>349</sup> For the same reason, he made use of the translation of the *Septuagint* rather than the Hebrew text,<sup>350</sup> although this translation deviates from the Hebrew in some matters.<sup>351</sup> His aim was to adapt his ideas and blend them with the mentality of the Greeks. His works were translated from Greek into Latin, but never transposed into Hebrew. If he had applied himself to teaching the Jews rather than to converting the Greeks, he would perhaps have received a greater reward for his efforts. If he had committed himself to teaching the Jews, he would have made his own Nation illustrious, attracting greater praise than he received from the Greeks, for his brothers were already keen to understand his doctrine.

The second author was Josephus the priest, who was a famous and extremely prudent historian. In his book, entitled *Jewish Antiquities*, he elucidated many parts of the Scripture.<sup>352</sup> [78v] In the same way, he also published his books in Greek. Besides these two illustrious men, no others of our Nation who have passed on their works in the Greek or Latin languages are to be found.

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347 Philo's rediscovery dates back to the thirteenth century. Then he mainly resurfaces in Azariah de Rossi, *Me'or 'enayim* (*The Light of the Eyes*). See Giuseppe Veltri, "The Humanist Sense of History and the Jewish Idea of Tradition: Azaria de' Rossi's Critique of Philo Alexandrinus," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 2 (1995): 372–93.

348 We could not trace any references to Philo in *The Jewish War*. In fact, Josephus mentions him in his *Jewish Antiquities* XVIII:259 and refers to his *Embassy to Caius*.

349 Modern scholarship has suggested that Philo wrote in Greek because he was writing for the linguistically assimilated Hellenised Jewish community of Alexandria, which did not know Hebrew.

350 See the account of the *Letter of Aristeas* in the Apocrypha.

351 See Veltri, *Libraries, Translations, and 'Canonic' Texts*, 26 ff.

352 This is probably the reason why Luzzatto listed him among the "*philosophantes*."

Ma poi che passarono le dottrine nella natione araba dopo la declinatione dell'Imperio romano, molti della natione composero libri de varie scientie in lingua araba. Fra li più antichi che si riserba memoria appresso la natione fu Rabbi Saadià che visse già ottocent'anni detto l'eccellentissimo, che ci arricchì d'un dottissimo libro circa gli articoli della fede. E così tutti quegli Hebrei che li seguirono per il corso de 500 anni in circa, se d'alcuna dottrina humana ragionarno, composero li loro libri in lingua araba et agarena, che quasi tutti per l'ingiuria de tempi e declinatione dell'Imperio arabo si sono smariti.

Fra gli huomini dotti di quel tempo si erresse e sublimò Rabbi Moise cordubense spagnolo, ma per habitatione detto egitio, che fu quasi coetaneo di Averoe comentatore, il quale per eccellenza di dottrina et<sup>73</sup> universalità di tutte le scientie, è reputato delli maggiori huomini che giamai fiorì nella natione. Fra molti libri che ci lasciò, compose *Il Direttore de Dubitanti* opera teologica, citata per autorità più d'una volta da maggiori e più eminenti teologi della Christianità, il qual libro fu tradotto e [79r] stampato nella lingua latina, ripieno di somma dottrina nel quale vi sono esposti li piu importanti dogmi della credenza hebraica a quali molti si rapportiamo. Et è notabile che siccome l'Egitto diede esordio alla celebrità della natione hebrea per cagione de protenti e miracoli ch'a favor suo occorsero, così anco produsse et educò li tre più famosi huomini ch'in la natione fiorirono: Moise profeta sommo legislatore nel principio della loro solevatione, Filone eloquentissimo oratore mentre ancor'erano appresso le nationi in alcuna stima, Rabì Moise hora sopranominato, egregio et eccellentissimo dottore nella loro caduta et oppressione.

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73 Qui l'autore usa "e" al posto di "&."

Afterwards, when doctrines [philosophy] were passed on to the Arab Nation following the decline of the Roman Empire, many composed books on various arts in the Arabic language.<sup>353</sup> Among the oldest whose memory is thus preserved is Rabbi Saadiah, called the “most excellent,”<sup>354</sup> who lived eight hundred years ago and enriched us with a highly learned book about the articles of faith. Thus, all those Jews who lived after him over the course of approximately 500 years wrote their books in the Arabic and Hagarene languages when discussing any human doctrine.<sup>355</sup> Almost all these books were lost to the ravages of time in the course of the decline of the Arabic empire.

Among the learned men of that time, Rabbi Moses the Cordovan clearly stood out and elevated [himself]. He was a Spaniard from Cordova, but he was also called an Egyptian because he used to live in Egypt.<sup>356</sup> He was almost a contemporary of the commentator Averroes. Because of his great erudition and universality in all the arts, [Rabbi Moses] is still considered one of the greatest men to ever flourish in the Nation. Among the many books he left us, he composed the *Guide for the Perplexed*, a theological work, cited as an authority more than once by the greatest and most eminent theologians of Christianity.<sup>357</sup> This book was translated [79r] and printed in Latin. [It] is full of the highest learning and sets forth the most important dogmas of the Jewish faith, on which we still rely. It is remarkable that just as Egypt gave rise to the fame of the Jewish Nation by means of the portents and miracles that took place in its favour, so too it produced and educated the three most famous men to flourish in the Nation: the prophet Moses, the highest legislator at the beginning of the national revival; Philo, the most eloquent orator while the Nation was still held in some esteem by other nations; and Rabbi Moses, the above-mentioned outstanding, distinguished, and excellent doctor, who lived during the Nation’s fall and oppression.

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353 See Giuseppe Veltri, *Language of Conformity and Dissent: On the Imaginative Grammar of Jewish Intellectuals in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2013), 254.

354 “Eccellentissimo” is a translation of the Hebrew word *gaon*.

355 The label “Hagarene” dates back to Jerome’s time. According to him, the Saracens should be called Hagarenes since they were descended from Hagar, Sarah’s slave in the biblical story of Abraham. See Giorgio Levi della Vida, “Saraceni,” in *Enciclopedia Italiana* (1936), available online at [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/saraceni\\_\(Enciclopedia-Italiana\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/saraceni_(Enciclopedia-Italiana)/) (last accessed April 2016).

356 In fact, when signing, Maimonides identified himself as “the Cordovan.” See Herbert A. Davidson, *Moses Maimonides: The Man and His Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4–5. In the medieval Latin world he was known as “Rabbi Moyses”: Wolfgang Kluxen, “Maimonides and Latin Scholasticism,” in *Maimonides and Philosophy*, ed. Shlomo Pines and Yirmiyahu Yovel (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1986), 224. Maimonides was also known to the Latin world by the name of “Moses Aegyptius.” It is worth signalling that Gianfrancesco Pico, also mentioned by Luzzatto, called him by this name. See Charles B. Schmitt, *Gianfrancesco Pico Della Mirandola (1469–1533) and His Critique of Aristotle* (Dordrecht: Springer 2013 [1967]), 61.

357 See Kluxen, “Maimonides and Latin Scholasticism”; Görg K. Hasselhof, *Dicit Rabbi Moyses: Studien zum Bild von Moses Maimonides im lateinischen Westen vom 13. bis 15. Jahrhundert* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann Verlag, 2004).

Seguì alcuni anni dopo al detto Rabì Moise, Maestro Levì al pari di qualsivoglia altro scientiato, e dottissimo huomo, questo benché terminasse la sua vita nel giro di trenta doi anni in circa tuttavia comentò tutte l'opere d'Aristotile, et espose molti d'Averoe arabo in lingua hebraica, parte de quali scritti a mano appresso di me si trovano. Di più compose un libro insigne et admirabile de moti celesti conforme a suoi principii, nuove osservazioni, e proprii calcoli, e con suo inventato sistema maggior volume che l'*Almagesto* di Tolomeo, con il quale ha frequenti altercationi, et in fra gli altre novità sostiene il primo mobile esser il cielo inferiore a tutti, il qual libro parimente si trova scritto a mano, ma in alcuna parte mutilato. Compose di più un singolare volume [79v] di teologia naturale detto *Bella Domini*,<sup>74</sup> et ancora lasciò un'espositione sopra tutta la Scrittura al paragone di qualsivoglia altra, ripiena d'ogni lume di scientia e dottrina, e non solo fu di profondo sapere, ma di quello che rare volte accade ornatissimo, et eloquentissimo nel suo modo di scrivere.

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74 In corsivo nella stampa dell'Angelica.

Some years after Rabbi Moses, Maestro Levi, a scholarly man whose talents could match those of any other learned man, succeeded him. Although his life ended at the age of about thirty-two,<sup>358</sup> he commented on all the works of Aristotle and expounded on much of the Arab Averroes in Hebrew.<sup>359</sup> Some of them [his books] are manuscripts in my possession.<sup>360</sup> Furthermore, he [Maestro Levi] also composed a remarkable and admirable book on the celestial motions, based on his own principles, new observations, and his own calculations. Thanks to his newly devised system, his book was much more valuable than Ptolemy's *Almagest*, with which he picked frequent arguments. Among other novelties, he held that the Prime Mover was the sky, inferior to all others.<sup>361</sup> This book is also available in manuscript, but it is mutilated in some places. He also composed a singular volume [79v] of natural theology called *The Wars of the Lord*,<sup>362</sup> and in addition left us an exposition of all the Scripture,<sup>363</sup> which can stand comparison with any other exposition, for it is filled with the light of science and doctrine. He not only acquired a profound knowledge, but also mastered an extremely ornate and most eloquent style of writing, which is very rare.<sup>364</sup>

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**358** In fact, he died at the age of fifty-two. Perhaps Luzzatto was referring to the fact that by January 1329, when he was thirty-one, Gersonides had finished *The Wars of the Lord*. For further details, see glossary.

**359** Between 1319 and 1324, Gersonides composed the philosophical commentaries on Averroes's *Short Commentaries* and *Middle Commentaries*. Colette Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996 [1985]), 283. See also Alexander Altmann, "Gersonides' Commentary on Averroes' Epitome of *Parva Naturalia* II.3 Annotated Critical Edition," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 46/47, Jubilee Volume (1928–29/1978–79) [Part 1] (1979–80): 1–31; Ruth Glasner, "Gersonides' Lost Commentary on the *Metaphysics*," *Medieval Encounters* 4 (1998): 130–57.

**360** This is the only passage in his Italian works where Luzzatto informs his readers about the books that are in his possession, and he does so with a certain pride since he specifies that he possesses manuscripts and not printed books.

**361** Luzzatto is possibly referring to the astronomical treatise included in the *Milhamot Adonai* (*The Wars of the Lord*, book 5, part 1); for further details, see Bernard R. Goldstein, "Levi ben Gershon (as astronomer)," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, second edition (2007), 12:701.

**362** English translation: Gersonides, *The Wars of the Lord, Treatise Three: On God's Knowledge*, trans. Norbert Max Samuelson (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1977).

**363** Between 1325 and 1338, Gersonides composed his biblical commentaries. See Sirat, *History*, 283; Abraham L. Lassen, ed., *The Commentary of Levi Ben Gersom (Gersonides) on the Book of Job* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1946); Menachem Kellner, ed., *Levi Ben Gershon (Gersonides), Commentary on Song of Songs* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

**364** Luzzatto describes the work of Gersonides by adding plenty of details and expressing his own admiration. However, while discussing Maimonides, he keeps a certain distance. On the relevance of Gersonides in Jewish culture, see Menachem Kellner, "Gersonides and his Cultured Despisers: Arama and Abravanel," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 6 (1976): 269–96.

Dopo questo fu Rabbi Casdai d'accutissimo ingegno, e fu il primo ch'ardì oppugnare la dottrina aristotelica, come anco riferisce l'illustrissimo signore Giovanni Francesco Pico Mirandola nel libro nominato (*Esame delle vanità delle Genti*). A questo successe il suo discepolo Rabbi Giosef d'Alba che diffinì, e determinò con applauso universale della natione li fondamenti, et articoli della Legge mosaica. Fra questi si può numerare Rabbi Abram Aben Ezrà antico espositore della Scrittura, prencipe si può dire degli espositori del senso letterale. Vi furono ancora altri conspiciu dottori di questa seconda classe, che per abbreviare non voglio annoverargli.

Alli predetti sono ossequenti gli Hebrei nelle openioni e dogmi pertinenti alli articoli della religione, come anco circa la moralità e modo di conversare, e diportarsi nel consortio humano, e vita civile con qual si sia gente e natione, che si bene li rabbini havessero in tal materia detto alcuna cosa che non si confermasse al stato presente, tengono che non si deve osservare come legge [80r] inalterabile e sempiterna, supponendo ch'habbiano scritto come conveniva al stato e conditione di quelle genti ne quali erano dispersi, giudicandoli incorrotti rapportatori dell'osservationi cerimoniali, non profetici legislatori della loro posterità, massime in quello appartiene alli affari humani sottoposti a tanta contingentia, e varietà, e che dipendono da una alterabile infinità di circostantie.

Et il loro iure civile non è precettivo, et imperativo, havendoci loro stessi instruiti ch'ogni patto, e volontaria constitutione e conventione in materia civile dissolve qualunque loro terminatione. E con tutto che tanto si riportano gli Hebrei alli dottori della seconda classe, non mancano però di ridurre li detti e pronunciati degli antichi in conformità delle dottrine comunemente abbracciate. E benché tengono per fermo che le verità non s'oppongono l'una all'altra, e che la semplice openione delli antichi dottori non si deve opponere all'evidentia, così

After him, there was Rabbi Ḥasdai,<sup>365</sup> who had a most sharp intelligence. He was the first who dared to oppose Aristotelian doctrine, as the illustrious Signor Giovanni Francesco Pico Mirandola relates in the book *Examination of the Vanities of the Nations*.<sup>366</sup> He was succeeded by his disciple, Rabbi Joseph Albo, who defined and determined, with the universal approval of the Nation, the foundations and articles of Mosaic Law.<sup>367</sup> Among these learned men, one can list Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra, an early expositor of Scripture and a leading authority, it is safe to say, on expositions given in the literal sense. There were also other outstanding sages within this second class, whom for the sake of brevity I do not wish to enumerate.

The Jews are respectful to the above-mentioned learned men as far as opinions and dogmas pertaining to the articles of their religion are concerned. [They also rely on them] as far as morality and ways of conversing and behaving in society and civil life, with whatever people or nation, are concerned. Although the rabbis have said things about such matters that have not confirmed the present condition, they hold that these words should not be considered **[80r]** inalterable and eternal laws. [In fact, the Jews] assume that they wrote in an appropriate manner with regard to the state and condition of those people among whom [the rabbis] were dispersed. [In fact, the Jews] deem them uncorrupted relators of ceremonial observations, not prophetic legislators for all posterity, especially for the things that pertain to human affairs, which are subject to such contingencies and variations and which depend upon an alterable infinity of circumstances.

Their [the rabbis'] civil law is not legally binding or mandatory, for [the rabbis] themselves have taught that every pact, voluntary constitution, and convention in civil matters has [the power] to dissolve any of their rulings. And even though Jews refer to the sages of the second class, they never fail to bring the sayings and proverbs of the ancients into accordance with widely held doctrines. In this, they firmly hold that the different truths do not contradict each other, and that the simple opinion of the ancient sages should not be opposed to the evidence.<sup>368</sup> In the same way,

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**365** See glossary.

**366** Giovanni Francesco Della Mirandola, *Ioannis Francisci Pici Mirandulae Domini and Concordiae Comitum Examen Vanitatis Doctrinae Gentium, & Veritatis Christianae Disciplinae Distinctum in Libros Sex* (s. l., 1520). In his *Examen*, Giovanni Francesco was influenced by Crescas's book *Or ha-Shem*. See Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Crescas' Critique of Aristotle. Problems of Aristotle's Physics in Jewish and Arabic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929). See also Schmitt, *Gianfrancesco*.

**367** Luzzatto is referring to Joseph Albo. On Albo's relevance for Christian culture, see Sina Rauschenbach, *Josef Albo (um 1380–1444). Jüdische Philosophie und christliche Kontroverstheologie in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

**368** In this long subordinate sentence, Luzzatto reports the opinion of Azariah de' Rossi without mentioning him. De' Rossi highlighted the contradictions among Talmudic opinions and the results of modern science. See Veltri, "The Humanist Sense," 389–91.



la loro auttorità supplisce agli Hebrei, ove che la ragione humana è manchevole e diffetosa di potere con suoi argomenti arrivarvi.

Seguono li cabalistici, terzo ordine de dottori hebrei. La loro dottrina non è altrimenti necessaria agli Hebrei d'approbbarla, benché tuttavia da alcuni della natione è con applauso ricevuta, e massime nella parte di Levante [80v] e Polonia. E perché questo nome di cabala ormai è divenuto volgare senza che si sapia la sua etimologia, e ciò che significa, intendo alquanto digredire in tal proposito, tanto più che questa dottrina fu dall'illustrissimo et eccellentissimo Giovanni Pico Mirandolano nelle lettere latine introdotta come nelle sue *Conclusioni* si può vedere, e non vi mancarono altri di lui seguaci.

Cabala significa propriamente ricevimento, et ha relatione a colui ch'apprende dal maestro, come la parola di traditione a quello ch'insegna et infonde la dottrina. Dicono adunque li cabalistici che siccome alli rabbini li furono consegnate le traditioni per l'osservanza de riti, così ad essi per la misteriosa esposizione della Scrittura. Si divide tal dottrina in due principali portioni: l'una si può chiamare quasi pratica, e s'occupa circa certe combinationi stravaganti delle lettere, calcoli de numeri, figure de caratteri hebraici, ch'insino l'apice d'una lettera è considerata da loro con mirabile esposizione, e s'applicano principalmente circa li nomi d'Iddio.

V'è l'altra parte più teorica, e scientifica, che considera la dipendenza di questo mondo corporale dal spirituale, incorporale et architipo. Tengono che vi siano alcuni principii, et origini seminarii de tutte le cose sensibili, che sono come continui fonti, che a guisa de acquidotti e canali deriva in [81r] loiro l'influsso della Divina Potenza,

their authority is helpful to the Jews in matters where human reason is deficient and defective in understanding by means of arguments.<sup>369</sup>

The third order of Jewish sages is the Kabbalists. The Jews are not obliged to accept their doctrine, although it is received with approval by some members of the Nation, especially in the Levant [80v] and Poland. Since the term “Kabbalah” has now become common without people being aware of its etymology and meaning, I intend to digress somewhat in this matter, especially since this doctrine was introduced into Latin letters by the most illustrious and excellent Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, as can be seen in his *Conclusions*,<sup>370</sup> and there are many people who follow him.

“Kabbalah” literally signifies “reception,” and it refers to those who learn directly from the master, as the word “tradition” refers to those who teach and instill the doctrine. The Kabbalists therefore state that just as traditions for the observance of the rites were handed over to the rabbis, in the same way they were given the mysterious expositions of the Scripture. This doctrine is divided into two main parts, of which one can almost be called practical. It deals with some odd combinations of letters, calculations of numbers,<sup>371</sup> and certain forms of the Hebrew characters. For even the crown of a letter is expounded by them with wonderful insight and skill. They mainly devote themselves to the names of God.

The other part of Kabbalah turns out to be more theoretical and scientific.<sup>372</sup> It considers the dependence of this corporeal world on the spiritual one, [which is] disembodied and archetypal. They believe that there are some principles and origins that are the seeds of all perceptual things. They are like ever-flowing fountains, which, like aqueducts and canals, can receive [81r] the influx of divine strength

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**369** This seems to anticipate the title of the *Socrates: How Feeble Human Intellect is Whenever It is not Supported by Divine Revelation*.

**370** Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Conclusiones DCCCC publice disputandae* (Roma: Eucharius Silber, 7 dicembre 1486); *Conclusiones Cabalisticæ numero XLVII. secundum doctrinam sapientium hebraeorum Cabalistarum, quorum memoria sit semper in bonum*; and *Conclusiones Cabalisticæ numero LXXI secundum opinionem propriam*. Modern edition: *Conclusiones Nongentæ: Le novecento tesi dell'anno 1486*, ed. Albano Biondi (Florence: Olschki, 1995); Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Syncretism in the West: Pico's 900 Theses (1486): The Evolution of Traditional Religious and Philosophical Systems*, ed. and trans Stephen A. Farmer (Tempe: MRTS, 1998). For further details, see glossary. For an analysis of Luzzatto's presentation of the Kabbalists see Bill Rebiger, “Sceptical Strategies in Simone Luzzatto's Presentation of the Kabbalists in his *Discorso*,” in *Yearbook of the Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies 2017*, ed. Bill Rebiger (Berlin, Boston: Walter De Gruyter, 2017): 51–69.

**371** Gematria, which assigned numerical values to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, in alphabetical order.

**372** From here on, Luzzatto will discuss his philosophical appraisal of kabbalistic doctrines, consistent with what Moshe Idel labeled the “philosophical orientation of Italian kabbalah.” Moshe Idel, “Major Currents in Italian Kabbalah between 1560 and 1660,” in *Essential Papers in Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 352.

et energia destinato a questo nostro mondo corporale, e numerano dieci principii fondamentali a tale fontione applicati, come anco li Pitagorici incontrarono in questo numero decenale, nel terminar li loro principii, ma erano duplicati per il distinto principio del bene e male.

Questi in parte s'assomigliano alle idee poste da Platone, ma a mio credere da diversi mottivi furono indotti li cabalistici ad introdurli. Platone seguì l'openione d'Eraclito, Cratilo, e Protagora ch'asserivano il tutto, che noi sentiamo, et apprendiamo essere in continuo motto, e flusso, anzi che non habbiamo cognitione d'altro che di motto e relatione, apprendendo noi solamente la nostra interna passione, e commotione. Et Eraclito ch'hebbe openione, ch'il tutto fosse composto de fuoco, a mio creder non si riferì solamente al calore qualità sensibile, ma alla continua sua estintione, e ristoratione, ch'in lui visibilmente si osserva simile alla flussibilità, e non interotta successione che comprendiamo nell'esser delle cose misurate dal tempo progressivo e transitorio, dovendo esser congeneri e simili, la misura, et il misurato, come dice Aristotile, e perciò ambi permanenti, ovvero successivi.

E l'affermare, e dire quello si muove è un transcorso della nostra mente, o per dir meglio della lingua, che suppone [81v] esservi cosa per se stessa subsistente che gli accade e se gli aggiunge l'accidente del motto. Onde Platone nel *Theeteto* lasciò scritto per nome delli detti filosofi, *principium autem ipsorum ex quo etiam ea quae nunc dicta sunt omnia dependant hoc est quod nimirum totum hoc, et universum motus sit, et aliud praeterea nihil*, non dice *in motu sit*, e poco dopo, *nam et agens esse aliquid, et rursus aliquid patiens de unu firmiter, ut aiunt cogitare non potest*, e segue poi, *nihil esse unum ipsum per se ipsum, sed alicui semper fieri, at esse undique eximendum est*.

and energy directed at this corporeal world of ours. They count ten fundamental principles assigned to the performance of this task.<sup>373</sup> The Pythagoreans also happened to set the number ten when they had to decide on the number of their own principles. However, they consider these principles to be duplicated, for they distinguish between the principle of good and the principle of evil.

These very same principles are similar in part to the ideas developed by Plato. However, in my opinion, the Kabbalists introduced them for different reasons. Plato followed the opinions of Heraclitus, Cratylus,<sup>374</sup> and Protagoras, who asserted that everything we perceive and apprehend is in continual motion and flux and that we do not have cognition of anything other than motion and relation, since we apprehend only our internal passions and emotions.<sup>375</sup> Heraclitus, who thought that everything was composed of fire, in my opinion did not merely refer to heat as a sensory quality, but also to its perpetual extinction and restoration, which appears to be visually similar to a flux or an uninterrupted sequence. These we understand to be in the existent things, mixed with progressive and transitory time.<sup>376</sup> For it is necessary that the measure and the measured be alike, as Aristotle says,<sup>377</sup> and therefore they must both be permanent or both successive.

The statement that something is moving is an error of our mind, or better expressed, of our way of speaking, which supposes [81v] that there is a thing subsistent in itself affected and joined by the accident of motion. Therefore, Plato wrote the name of the said philosophers in the *Theaetetus*: “*These mysteries begin from the principle on which all that we have just been saying also depends, namely, that everything is really motion, and there is nothing but motion.*”<sup>378</sup> He does not say it is in motion, but shortly thereafter, “[f]or even in the case of the active and passive motions it is impossible, as they say, for thought, taking them singly,”<sup>379</sup> and then he follows with: “*There is nothing which in itself is just one thing; all things become relatively to something.*”<sup>380</sup>

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373 The ten *Sefirot*. However, Lattes remarks that Luzzatto does not mention the ten *Sefirot* belonging to the *Siṭra Aḥra*, the evil side (Lattes, *Ma’amar*, 171 n. 194).

374 See glossary.

375 Luzzatto is here stressing the temporal aspect of human knowledge. Nothing is fixed and stable. Men are the passive recipients of knowledge acquired through the senses (*patior/passions*) or can be subjected to emotions (*commotio, cum moveo*). In both cases, humans are passive recipients and the sensations or emotions they are subjected to are temporary and passing.

376 In this discussion of Heraclitus’s thought, Luzzatto probably had in mind Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, “Heraclitus,” IX:1,7–8.

377 Aristotle, *Metaphysics* X:1 (1052a15–1053a30, particularly 1053a30).

378 Plato, *Theaetetus* 156a.

379 *Ibid.*, 157a.

380 *Ibid.*, 156b.

E fu l'openione de detti filosofi di tentare a guisa de giganti oppugnare l'essere delle cose, e mandare in esilio dall'idioma humano il verbo sostantivo dell'esser. E Platone nel dialogo detto *Cratilo*, over de impositione di nomi, adduce una quantità di parole, che dinotano solamente flusso, motto, attione, e passione. Et al suo proposito sarebbe stata la lingua sacra che li manca il tempo presente, e si serve del participio accompagnato con il verbo dell'essere accomodabile ad ogni tempo passato, et avvenire e vien preso il futuro per il passato, e di più sono ancor mescolati insieme, come a gramatici è manifesto, openione parimente recitata da Aristotile nel IV della *Metafisica*.

Ma Platone adherendo in parte al detto parere, con più maniera placida non assenti esimere affatto dall'universo l'essere di qualunque cosa esistente e permanente, congieturando che vi fossero oltre l'appressione de nostri [82r] sen|si alcune sostanze ferme e fisse, che senza il rapportamento e relatione ad altrui per se stesse potessero havere essentia stabile, e ferma, e che queste fossero l'origini de quelle apprensioni, che da noi si sentono, che propriamente ombre et<sup>75</sup> vani simulacri si potrebbero nominare, dottrina come lui attesta nelle sue *Epistole* di grande applicatione di mente e sforzo d'ingegno d'apprendere una cosa pura, sincera, e denudata dal mesculio di relatione e moto, essendo ogni oggetto da questi vessato, et invilupato come dimostra Sesto Empirico, che da cinque spetii di relatione quasi tutte le cose sono accompagnate et involte, anzi vintilandole, quasi altro di loro che relatione non si comprende, cosa tanto fievole e tenue, che li Stoici, e dopo loro i nominali, li negorono l'essere se non chimerico, et imaginario, e per dir meglio verbale.

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75 Qui si è mantenuta la “et” dell'edizione originale.

And the said philosophers wanted to make the attempt, like giants, to debunk the being of things and to exile the infinitive tense of the verb “being,” used as a noun, from human speech.<sup>381</sup> And Plato, in the dialogue *Cratylus* or *On the Imposition of Names*, adduced a number of words that only denoted flux, motion, action, and passion.<sup>382</sup> The Hebrew language would have fitted his conception, for it lacks the present tense and uses the participle accompanied by the verb “to be” conjugated in the past and future tenses. And the future and past tense are interchangeable and mixed together, which is obvious to the grammarians. Such an opinion [was] similarly expressed by Aristotle in book four of the *Metaphysics*.<sup>383</sup>

Plato, however, adhering in part to the stated opinion, yet in a calmer manner, was not satisfied with entirely denying the existence and permanence of the being of anything whatsoever, for he conjectured that beyond the apprehension [82r] of our senses, there were some firm and fixed substances. [According to his view,] these substances need neither a confrontation nor a relation to others, and thus may have a stable and firm existence in themselves. Furthermore, these [substances] were the origins of those apprehensions that we perceive and could be called shadows and unsubstantial appearances. This is the doctrine he affirms in his *Letters*, which involves a great application of mind and a great force of intellect to apprehend a thing as pure, genuine, and stripped of the commingling of relation and motion, for every object is burdened and wrapped up in these. This is what Sextus Empiricus demonstrated, i.e., that every phenomenon and object is mixed and involved in five kinds of relations. Proceeding in his examination, he even demonstrated that it is almost impossible to grasp anything about objects other than their relation.<sup>384</sup> This thing [the relation] would be so feeble and slight that the Stoics, and after them the Nominalists, would negate its existence, [by saying that] it was chimerical and imaginary, or even better, verbal.

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**381** Luzzatto is here speculating on a certain tendency in Greek philosophical thought enhancing the idea that being is not fixed and stable, but in motion. For this reason, he refers to Heraclitus and Cratylus and to an aspect of Plato's thought also focused on the concept of movement and temporality.

**382** Plato, *Cratylus* 401b ff. In fact, Plato discusses names of heroes and men and Gods. While discussing the name of Hestia (ibid., 401d), he said: “On the other hand, those who use the name ‘ōsia’ [being] seem to agree pretty much with Heraclitus’ doctrine that the things that are are all flowing and that nothing stands fast.” However, the crucial passage comes after few lines. Socrates evokes Heraclitus’ doctrine and then states (ibid., 402b): “Don’t you think that whoever gave the names ‘Rhea’ and ‘Cronus’ to the ancestors of the other gods understood things in the same way as Heraclitus? Or do you think he gave them both the names of streams (*rheumata*) merely by chance?”

**383** Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV:2 (1003a33–b18).

**384** Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* I:15.

Alla openione platonica pare che aderì Filone hebreo nel *Libro della Monarchia*, trattando della richiesta di Moise in voler comprendere le cose divine, onde lo fa ragionare in questa maniera. *Persuades inquit mihi me non posse manifestam imaginationem tui mente concipere, oro tamen, ut saltem gloriam tuam videre liceat, gloriam dico potestates quarum stiparis satellitio, quae actenus ignoratae miro me torquet cognitionis desiderio*, e poco dopo seguita, *tales cogitandae sunt potestates, quae mihi astant pro apparitoribus, qualitates formasque addunt rebus qualitate, formaque carentibus, absque ullo sempiternae suae naturae* [82v] *detri|mento, haec non temere ideae nominantur a quibusdam vestratibus, etc.* E sebbene non piglia così strettamente l'openione di Platone, come io l'ho riferita, tuttavia in gran parte a lui s'accosta, non ponendo queste idee nella mente divina, ma che siano principii, et origini, benché da Dio dipendenti, imperò divisi, e distinti da lui. E li Platonici soriani, che fu l'ultima scola d'academici, come Plotino, Iamblico, e Profirio, a questa openione si accostarono.

Ma li cabalistici, fondando li loro pensieri sopra la traditione, v'aggiunsero questa ragione per renderla probabile, ch'osservarono tutte le cose mondane havere insieme una vicina, e prossima graduatione di brevi intervalli distinta, come per esempio, gli elementi con le qualità simboliche sono annessi insieme, come dimostra Aristotile nel libro *De Caelo, et mundo*. E così fra le pietre, e li metalli, vi sono li mezzi minerali, e fra metalli non dal piombo la natura trapassa immediate all'oro, ma vi s'interpone diversità di metalli che gradualmente ascendono al valore dell'oro, così da questi al vegetabile v'è il coralo, e parimente fra le piante e li animali media le spongie e le conchiglie. Tutte l'altre cose si distinguono subordinatamente senza admettere transcorso stravagante, ma con dolcissimo modo sono legate, e congiunte insieme. Così anco nel trapassar dall'infinto, [83r] semplicemente uno, imutabile, et incorporale, al terminato, multiplice, variabile, e corporale,

It appears that Philo the Jew adhered to the Platonic view in his book *On Monarchy*, dealing with the request of Moses and his desire to comprehend the divine things. Hence he makes him argue in the following manner: “*I never could have received the vision of Thee clearly manifested, but I beseech Thee that I may at least see the glory that surrounds Thee, and by Thy glory I understand the powers that keep guard around Thee, of whom I would fain gain apprehension, for though hitherto that has escaped me, the thought of it creates in me a mighty longing to have knowledge of them.*”<sup>385</sup> And a little further on, he continues, “[S]uch you must conceive My powers to be, supplying quality and shape to things which lack either and yet changing or lessening nothing of their [82v] eternal nature. Some among you call them not inaptly ‘forms’ or ‘ideas,’ etc.”<sup>386</sup> And although Philo did not accept the opinion of Plato as strictly as I have related it, he came remarkably close. Yet he did not assume that such ideas exist in the divine mind. [He rather considered them] to be principles and origins. Although they were dependent on God, he believed them to be divided and distinct from Him, as did the Syrian Platonists, who were the last school of Academics, such as Plotinus,<sup>387</sup> Iamblichus,<sup>388</sup> and Porphyry,<sup>389</sup> who adhered to this opinion.

But the Kabbalists, basing their thoughts on tradition, added the following reasoning to make the tradition plausible, for they observed that all mundane things share a close and proximate gradation of short, distinct intervals. This is the case, for example, with the elements, which are connected with the symbolic qualities, as Aristotle demonstrates in his book *De Coelo et Mundo*.<sup>390</sup> And among the stones and metals, there would be the half-minerals; and among the metals, nature does not pass directly from lead to gold, but interposes a diversity of metals that gradually ascend to the value of gold. In the same way, between these and the vegetable and plant kingdom there is coral, and similarly, sponges and shells bridge the gap between plants and animals. All the other things are differentiated subordinately without admitting peculiar lapses. Instead, they are linked and joined together in a very gradual manner. In the same way, in the transition from the infinite, [83r] the One, immutable and incorporeal, to the finite, composite, mutable, and corporeal,

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**385** Philo, *On the Special Laws* I:45. “De Monarchia” is a section of the first book of *On the Special Laws*.

**386** Ibid. I.47–48.

**387** See glossary.

**388** See glossary.

**389** See glossary and Eyjólfur Emilsson, “Porphyry,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2015 edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, available online at <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2015/entries/porphyry/> (last accessed April, 2016).

**390** Aristotle, *On the Heavens*. During the Middle Ages, it was called *De coelo et mundo*, a title stemming from an Arabic translation which confused the original work with the apocryphal *De Mundo*. Dante used to quote the work with the title *De coelo et mundo*. See Enrico Berti, “De Coelo,” in *Enciclopedia dantesca* (1970), available online at [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/de-coelo\\_\(Enciclopedia-Dantesca\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/de-coelo_(Enciclopedia-Dantesca)/) (last accessed June 2016).



conviene infraporre alcune essentie, ch'in parte per la loro spiritualità, et eccellenza havessero alcuna corrispondenza, e simbolo con l'eminenza infinita d'Iddio, e per essere dipendenti e creati havessero parimente alcuna convenienza, e simpattia con le creature mondane.

E queste sono l'idee de cabalistici differenti fra loro secondo la varietà de loro offitii, alcuni di loro applicati al rigore della giustizia, altri alla pietà, et altri ad una temperata clemenza, differenti dalli angeli, che la loro fontione è il contemplare, et essequire li voluntarii comandamenti d'Iddio, assumendo anco vestito corporale per apparire agli huomini. Di più tengono che queste idee si trovano in quadruplicata distintione, alcune le più degne sono diffuse overo ispirati, le seconde create, le terze formate, le quarte et ultime operate, e perfettionate, essendo l'une subordinate all'altre con regolata hierarchia. Le qual dottrine haverebbono bisogno di lunga discussione, addattandosi molti lochi della Scrittura in conformità del parere di detti cabalistici. Come spurii tralignarono dalla dottrina sopra detta li Valentiniani, e Gnostici, et altri eretici antichi, come si può vedere in Epifanio dottor greco, et Ireneo latino. Solo Avicena famoso autor arabo, [83v] pare che s'accostasse alli cabalistici, ponendo certa concatenatione de cause spirituali, per evitare l'incomodo che da una semplice causa derrivasse la molteplicità d'effetti, come nella sua *Metafisica* si può vedere.

Di più ancora li cabalistici, fra l'anima et il corpo vi pongono una essentia per mezzo della quale l'anima si fa capace de passioni e sentimenti, e questo suppongono esser un spirito di corpo sottilissimo conforme alli veicoli asserti da Platonici, e tengono che s'accompagna all'anima dopo la partenza del corpo, per mezzo del quale patisce le pene afflittive per cagione d'errori commessi, e de Dante nel canto XXV del Purgatorio, trattando dell'anima:

*E quando Lachesis non ha più lino  
Solvesi da la carne, et in virtute  
Seco ne porta, e l'humano, e'l divino.*

*L'altre potenze tutte quante mute  
Memoria, intelligenza, e voluntade  
In atto molto più che prima acute.*

we should similarly interpose some other essences. These essences are supposed to have a partial connection with the eminent infinity of God by means of their spirituality and excellence, and [on the other hand] they are also supposed to bear similarity with mundane creatures because of their being dependent and created.

These are the Kabbalists' ideas, [and these ideas] differ among themselves according to the variety of their tasks. Some of them adhere to the severity of justice, others to mercy, and others to a tempered clemency. They differ from the angels, whose function is to contemplate and carry out the voluntary commandments of God, sometimes by assuming corporeal form in order to appear to men. Furthermore, [the Kabbalists] believe that these ideas exist in four distinct ways: the worthiest are emanated or inspired, the second created, the third shaped, and the fourth and last made and completed. Each is subordinate to the other in a regulated hierarchy. These doctrines would need long discussion, for many passages in the Scripture can be suitably interpreted in conformity with the opinions of the said Kabbalists. The Valentinians and Gnostics and other ancient heretics deviated illegitimately from the above doctrine, as one can see in the Greek scholar Epiphanius<sup>391</sup> and in Irenaeus Latinus.<sup>392</sup> Only Avicenna, the famous Arab author, [83v] appears to have approached the Kabbalists, positing a certain chain of spiritual causes in order to avoid the difficulty that a multiplicity of effects would derive from a simple cause, as can be seen in his *Metaphysics*.<sup>393</sup>

Moreover, the Kabbalists placed an essence between the soul and the body, by means of which the soul becomes capable of passions and sentiments, and this they supposed to be the spirit of a most subtle body, similar to the vehicles asserted by Platonists. They maintain that it accompanies the soul after its departure from the body, by means of which it suffers tormenting punishments on account of the sins committed,<sup>394</sup> as Dante writes in canto 25 of the *Purgatory*, treating of the soul:

*When Lachesis has no more flax  
The soul is loosed from the flesh and carries with it  
Potentially both the human and the divine faculties*

*All the others mute  
Memory, intelligence, and will in action  
And far keener than before.*<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> See glossary.

<sup>392</sup> See glossary.

<sup>393</sup> Avicenna, *Metaphysics* IX:1–4. See Herbert A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect and Theories of Human Intellect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 209.

<sup>394</sup> Concerning the kabbalists' belief in the existence of a soul that is able to feel passions, see Giuseppe Veltri, "Platonische Mythen und rabbinische exegetische Entwicklungen," in *Gegenwart der Tradition*, ed. Giuseppe Veltri (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 195–212.

<sup>395</sup> Dante, *Purgatory* canto XXV, lines 79–84.

Cioè quando occorre la separatione dell'anima intellettiva, dal corpo humano, s'uniscono con lei altre potenze, et in particolare la sensitiva, con sue facultà, supposte tutte dal poeta, per la parte humana, restando però mute, cioè consopite, rimesse, ubbidienti, e non petulanti, e disordinate come già erano mentre l'anima informava il corpo, ma allhora fiache, come radice di pianta sbarbicata [84r] dal suo terreno. Al contrario l'anima divina, et intellettiva, essendo divisa dal consortio del corpo insieme con le sue proprie potenze, dal poeta esposte, si rinfrancano, e radoppiano il vigore, il qual testo del poeta, né dal Daniello, e Velutello fu in tal senso esplicato. Segue poco dopo l'istesso poeta:

*Tosto che luogo là, la circonscrive  
 La virtù formativa raggia intorno,  
 Così, e quanto ne le membra vive,  
 E come l'aere quand'è ben piorno,  
 Per l'altrui raggio, ch'in sé si riflette,  
 Di diversi color si mostra adorno;  
 Così l'aer vicin quivi si mette  
 In quella forma, che in lui suggella  
 Virtualmente l'alma che ristette.*

Rassimiglia quel vestito aereo e spirituale, che si forma intorno l'anima dopo la separatione, all'iride celeste che rappresenta la figura del sole per li suoi raggi, che riflettono in quella parte nuvolosa e piovosa che l'è dirimpetto, e sebbene il poeta v'aggiunge poi l'apparenza visibile, le lacrime, e la voce, et altre proprietà corporali, li cabalistici più oltre non trapassano, che

That is, when the intellectual soul separates from the human body, other powers and especially the sensory soul unite with it. The faculties of the sensory soul are all assumed by the poet to belong to the human part, remaining mute, that is, stupefied, submissive, docile, and not petulant and disorderly as they were when the soul inhabited the body. Instead, [after the separation they would be] as weak as the roots of a plant pulled from [84r] the ground. On the contrary, the divine and intellectual soul, having been divided from the body with its own faculties intact, as expounded by the poet, recovers and redoubles its vigour. Neither Daniello nor Velutello<sup>396</sup> understands this section of the poet's work in this way. Afterwards, the poet continues:

*As soon as space envelops it there  
The formative virtue radiates round about,  
In form and measure as in the living members;  
  
And as the air, when it is full of rain,  
Becomes adorned with various colours  
Through another's beams that are reflected in it,  
  
So the neighbouring air sets itself  
Into that form which the soul that stopped there  
Stamps upon it by its power.*<sup>397</sup>

He compares the ethereal and spiritual covering that forms itself around the soul after the separation to the celestial rainbow that represents the figure of the sun surrounded by its own rays. [These rays] are reflected in that cloudy and rainy part which is opposite it [the sun]. And although the poet then adds the visible appearance, tears, the voice, and other corporeal attributes, the Kabbalists do not go further. For they

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**396** Dante Alighieri, *Dante con l'esposizione di M. Bernardino Daniello da Lucca* (In Venetia: Appresso Pietro da Fino, 1568), 418: "L'altre potenze tutte quante MUTE, portandosene quest'anima intellettiva et rationale seco, et la vegetativa et la sensitiva, vien à lasciare insieme col corpo mute et morte l'altre POTENZE, cioè i sentimenti esteriori. Ma come lascia ella i sensi muti se se ne porta seco l'anima sensitiva? Qui è d'avertire che chiama il Poeta i sensi esteriori potenze, non perché in loro sia senso, ma perché sonoin potenza di sentire, come l'occhio ch'è l'instrumento et organo della vista, et l'orecchia dell'audito, è in potenza l'uno di vedere, l'altra d'udire, quando l'anima sensitiva si unisce con essi. Rimangono adunque consopite et mute insieme col corpo queste potenze, et all'oncontro se ne vanno con l'anima intellettiva Memoria, INTELLIGENZA, cioè l'apprensiva, et la volontà, più acute et più vive in atto che non erano prima, quando erano mute col corpo." For Bernardino Daniello, see glossary. Dante Alighieri, *La Comedia con la nova esposizione di Alessandro Vellutello* (Vinegia: Francesco Marcolini, 1544): s.p.: "Adunque mostra, come dividendosi questanime dal corpo, ne porta seco tutte le sue potentie, comè la vegetativa e la sensitiva, le quali, perche vengono dal corpo, sono la parte humana, E la ragione, la qual è de lanima rationale, perche vien da Dio, è la divina parte, E così anchora assume laltre mute potentie, come è memoria, intelligentia, e voluntade, lequali sono in atto molto acute, e posson molto più perfettamente operare, che quando erano unite al corpo, dalqual, ne loperatione, non poco erano impeditate."

**397** Dante, *Purgatory* canto XXV, lines 88–96.

attribuire al detto adobbamento et invoglio, che l'impressione d'alcuni passioni corporali, dovendo esser adminicolo e mezzo che l'anima intellettiva in sé rissentì le pene afflittive, come ancor gli avviene nel stato presente [84v] per esser unita con il corpo. Fu openione ancora de sopradetti cabalisti la transmigratiōe pitagorica, e non de talmudisti, come in ciò legiermente s'ingannò il dottissimo Lipsio, poichè giamai non fecero mentione di tal pensiero, anzi che da teologi della seconda classe fu tal parere affatto oppugnato.

Molti sono li libri che di cabala trattano, in fra gli altri uno intitolato *De Creatiōe*, principale in tal proposito, parimente un altro volume grandissimo sopra li cinque libri de Moise nominato *Il Splendore*, attribuito ad uno d'antichi rabbini. Fra li celebri auttori di tal materia è nominato Rabi Moise Gerundense, che fu di acutissimo ingegno. Né altro per hora mi resta dire circa li cabalistici, ché volendo esplicar esatamente le loro dottrine vi converrebbe un volume da per sé.

Vi si trova ancora un'altra quarta classe d'Hebrei stimata dal comune della natiōe scismatica, et eretica, nominata charaita, e sono un residuo delli antichi Saducei, li quali non admettevano alcuna traditione, et espongono la Scrittura conforme il loro proprio sentimento, e dimorano in alcune poche città de Levante. Sono fra di loro talmente discrepanti, che qualunque d'essi è auttore di nuove espositioni, non havendo la norma della traditione che li rattenga al segno della concordia, et unione. Ma è ben vero che sono più corretti che li [85r] antichi Saducei, admettendo essi l'incorporalità et immortalità dell'anima, come anco assentiscono che vi siano angioli immateriali, dogmi negati e ruscati dalli Saducei. Sono pochissimi di numero, tenui di facoltà, e privi d'ogni auttorità, et in più depresso stato appresso l'altre natiōi, di quello sono gli ordinarii Hebrei, s'appellano charaiti, cioè gramatici, per la peritia ch'hanno piuttosto della costruttiōe gramaticale, che del vero senso della Scrittura.

attribute to that covering and dress only the impression of some corporeal passions, since it must be the instrument and means by which the intellectual soul feels the inflicted pains as they occur in the present state [84v], since it is united with a body. In addition, the said Kabbalists believed in the transmigration of the soul according to Pythagoras, which the Talmudists did not. In this matter, the most learned Lipsius seems to have erred slightly,<sup>398</sup> since the Talmudists never mentioned that thought. On the contrary, this opinion was completely refuted by the second class of theologians.

There are many books about the Kabbalah. The most important among them is the one entitled *The Book of Creation*;<sup>399</sup> likewise, there is another extremely large volume on the five books of Moses called the *Splendour*, attributed to one of the rabbis of old.<sup>400</sup> Among the famous authors expounding on such material is Rabbi Moses Gerondi,<sup>401</sup> who had a very sharp mind. At the moment, I have nothing else to say about the Kabbalists, since to explain their doctrines properly would require a volume in itself.

And yet there is a fourth class of Jews, called Karaites, who are considered by the entire Nation to be schismatics and heretics. They are vestiges of the ancient Sadducees, who did not accept any tradition. They interpret the Scripture according to their own opinion and live in a few cities in the Levant. Among them there are such discrepancies that every one of them is the author of new expositions, not having the norm of traditions that would keep them in agreement and union. It is, however, really true that they are more correct than the [85r] ancient Sadducees, since they accept the incorporeality and immortality of the soul, and they also agree that there are incorporeal angels. [These] dogmas were negated and denied by the Sadducees. They [i.e., the Karaites] are very few in number, poor in wealth, without any authority, and in a more abased state among the nations than the ordinary Jews. They are called “Karaites,” that is, “grammarians,” because of the skill they have in grammatical constructions, rather than in the true sense of Scripture.<sup>402</sup>

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**398** Justus Lipsius, *Physiologiae Stoicorum Libri tres* (Antverpiae: Ex Officina Plantiniana, 1610), 172–73, dissertatione XII, “De Migratione Animarum in Corpora. Plures ita sensisse non tamen Stoicos.” The comparison with Pythagoras also stems from this source.

**399** *Sefer Yeşirah*.

**400** *Sefer ha-Zohar*, see glossary.

**401** See glossary under “Nahmanides.”

**402** This presentation of the Karaites is very biased and does not acknowledge the fact that they did not only live in the Levant, as Luzzatto states. For the Karaites in Poland and Lithuania, see Stefan Schreiner, “Josef Schelomo Delmedigos Aufenthalt in Polen-Litauen,” in *An der Schwelle zur Moderne: Juden in der Renaissance*, ed. Giuseppe Veltri and Annette Winkelmann (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 207–32; concerning Luzzatto and his reliability, *ibid.*, 226.

Quest'è quanto mi è sovvenuto dire circa li studii degli Hebrei in materia della Sacra Scrittura. In quanto poi alla loro applicatione delle scientie humane, non solo appresso di loro non si trova alcuna prohibitione, anzi che tengono per precetto legale il dedicarsi alla contemplatione delle cose naturali per conseguirne una probabile cognitione della grandezza d'Iddio, e molto più anco si tengono obligati impiegarsi nel studio dell'astronomia sì per il bisogno che s'ha dell'institutione de giorni festivi, sì anco per esser quella scientia una certa introduzione alla cognitione della sapienza, e potenza divina, conforme al detto del Salmista, *in coelis praeparabitur veritas (over fides) tua in eis*<sup>76</sup>, cioè li cieli sono quelli, per mezzo de quali, dispone, e **[85v]** prepara Iddio l'animo degli huomini alla fede, contemplando la loro vastità, e velocità di motto, e fermezza di periodi, et immutabilità de loro giri.

E per certo gli Hebrei ritrovandosi nel stato presente di soggettione, non havendo altro di libero affatto che l'impiego della loro mente ne studii, e dottrine, dove-rebbono in ciò applicarsi con ogni loro pensiero, et industria, e tenere per certo che l'unità de dogmi, la protectione che da Prencipi furono favoriti, e la conservatione che per sì lungo corso di tempo contra tante oppressioni hanno ottenuto, parlando humanamente, sono derrivate dalla virtù, e dottrine d'alcuni pochi di loro, ch'appresso li dominanti si sono acquistati credito, et autorità, essendo privi di qualunque altro adminicolo d'aspirare per altra via a favori, e gratie di grandi. E devono esser certi, che mancando in loro l'apretiamiento delle lettere, e la stima de virtuosi, sono per incorrere in alcuna notabile declinatione, e più disprezzabile oppressione, che per il passato giamai hanno patito.

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<sup>76</sup> Psalmi 88:3: "præparabitur veritas tua in eis."

This is what comes to my mind to say about the studies of the Jews concerning the Sacred Scripture. With regard, then, to their study of humanistic learning, not only are no prohibitions to be found among them, but also the Jews hold it to be a legal precept to dedicate themselves to the contemplation of natural things, in order to obtain a probable knowledge of the grandeur of God.<sup>403</sup> They also consider themselves much more obliged to pursue the study of astronomy, both because of the need they have for determining feast days and also because that science offers a secure introduction to understanding divine knowledge and power, as the Psalmist says: “*In the very heavens, Thou dost prepare Thy truth [i.e., faith] in them.*”<sup>404</sup> This means that by means of the skies, God disposes and [85v] prepares the souls of men for faith, contemplating their vastness, the velocity of motion and the stability of the cycles, and the immutability of their rotations.

Certainly, the Jews, finding themselves in their present state of subjection and having no freedom whatsoever apart from applying their minds to study and doctrine, should devote themselves to these with all their skill and industry. They should be aware of the fact that the unity of dogmas, the patronage granted by the princes, and the protection from so much oppression were obtained over such a long period of time, humanly speaking, from the learning of a virtuous few. They acquired credibility and authority under those who ruled, since they were deprived of all other means of aspiring to the favours and graces of the great in any other way. [The Jews] should [therefore] rest assured that if they were to lack appreciation deriving from their command of [liberal] letters and the esteem of the virtuous, they would incur a considerable decline and a more despicable oppression than they have ever endured in the past.

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**403** See Gianfranco Miletto, “The Teaching Program of David ben Abraham and His Son Abraham Provenzali in the Historical-Cultural Context of the Time,” in *Cultural Intermediaries: Jewish Intellectuals in Early Modern Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman and Giuseppe Veltri (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2004), 127–48.

**404** Psalms 89:3. Hebrew: שִׁמְיִם, תִּכְיֵן אֲמוֹנֶתֶךָ בָּהֶם.



## CONSIDERATIONE XVII

### *Si discorre circa la causa della varia permissione delli Hebrei, et anco di alcune espulsioni occorse alla nazione*

[86r] Nelle questioni filosofiche, e scolastici abbattimenti, dopo la digladiatione delle ragioni, è costume capitare all'armi delle autorità inesorabili, et alle volte invincibili. Così credo che alcuno non potendo affrontare alle cose antedette procurerà combatterci con l'oppugnationi dell'esempio et autorità, dicendo che se gli Hebrei apportino tanti e tali commodi, qual è la cagione che Principi prudentissimi, republiche sapientissime escludano da loro Stati la nazione hebrea, come Spagna, Francia, Inghilterra, e moltissime città di Germania, et in Italia non poche? Alla quale istanza si risponde, che in caso politico di poco momento è l'argomentare dal loco dell'esempio, e siccome è vanità usare l'autorità nelle matematiche per la loro evidenza e certezza, così anco in materia politica è absurdità per la contingenza e diversità d'individuali accidenti.

Ogni dominio e città hanno le loro circostanze e proprietà particolari, che non s'asestano al governo d'altrui. Non vi è città in Europa, che in materia civile, [86v] e criminale, non habbia le sue leggi particolari, e municipali, né però l'una è instructione e documento all'altra, e quando ciò fosse l'autorità dell'eccellentissimo Senato veneto nell'abbracciare la nazione hebrea dovrebbe essere a tutte l'altre ammaestramento, e norma di admettere nelli loro Stati gli Hebrei. E non è dubbio che tutti egualmente li permetterebbero, come amatori di populationi, e desiosi d'utili et entrate, ma la diversa dispositione, et impiego de popoli è cagione ch'essi Principi inclinano, e si dispongono a secondare li loro capricci, non volendo o non convenendo usarli forza. E l'istessa Serenissima Republica concede habitatione alli Hebrei nella propria città, capo del dominio, ma non in Brescia, Bergamo, Crema, et alcune altre città del Stato, e ciò per la repugnanza, e renitenza de popoli contra la nazione.

E sebbene non si può con ferma ragione discorrere fra tante varietà de pensieri di popoli, nondimeno probabilmene si può dire, che le città che non hanno porto di mare, populatione numerosa, concorso di forastieri, e commissioni de negotii da tutte le parte del mondo, come ha la città di Venetia, conviene alli Hebrei che in esse dimorano sostenersi

## CONSIDERATION XVII

### *Discussions Regarding the Causes of the Various Permissions Granted to the Jews, Also Mentioning Several Expulsions That Befell the Jewish Nation*

[86r] Upon addressing questions of a philosophical nature or Scholastic debates, after challenging the reasons, it is customary to resort to the inexorable and occasionally invincible arms of authority. Thus, I believe that someone who is unable to confront the above-mentioned matters will attempt to argue using the weapons of example and authority. They [will] argue that if the Jews brought so many benefits, why did the most prudent princes and most sagacious republics exclude them from their states, as Spain, France, and England did,<sup>405</sup> and as many cities in Germany as well as not a few in Italy have also done? To this question, one could respond that in political matters, an argument based on example carries little weight. Just as it is futile to turn to authority in mathematics, since such proofs are evident and certain by themselves, it is absurd to argue political matters on the basis of authority, because of the contingency and diversity of individual occurrences.

Every dominion and city has its particular circumstances and characteristics, which are not relevant to the government of others. There is no city in Europe that does not have its particular municipal laws in civil [86v] and criminal matters. [No city,] however, can become an example or lesson for another. And if this were the case, the example of the most excellent Venetian Senate ought to teach a lesson and offer a standard to all the others as far as the admission of the Jews into their state is concerned. And there is no doubt that all states would admit them equally, for they desire a [large] population that can bring profit from entrance taxes. Nonetheless, the varying dispositions and employment of the populace provide reasons for those princes who are inclined and disposed to yield to their whims. In fact, they do not wish to use force against the populace, nor do they find it convenient to. Even the Most Serene Republic itself allows the Jews to dwell in its own city, the capital of the state, but not in Brescia, Bergamo, Crema, or some other cities of the state, as a result of the people's aversion and unwillingness towards the Nation.

Although one cannot discourse with certitude upon the great range of opinions that prevail among the populations, it can nevertheless probably be said that there are cities that do not have a seaport, a large population, a multitude of foreigners, and trade commissions from all parts of the world, as is the case with the city of Venice. The Jews residing in those cities must support themselves, [choosing at least]

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<sup>405</sup> England was to allow Jews to reside in that country again in 1656, less than twenty years after the publication of the *Discourse*, while France was to obtain Jews through the annexation of Alsace, recognised at the Treaty of Westphalia and by the end of the seventeenth century was to acquiesce in the open emergence of the crypto-Jewish communities of Iberian origin in southern France.

in uno de tre modi: primo, con l'usura siccome fanno in alcune città d'Italia, e Germania; secondo, per mezzo dell'[87r] essercitio delle arti comuni delle città; terzo, come in Levante, con l'entrate de beni stabili tenuti ad affitto.

L'usura li rende egualmente poco amabili a tutti gli ordini della città, l'essercitio delle arti al popolo minuto, il possesso de beni stabili alla nobiltà e grandi. Queste sono le cause essenziali, et efficaci che gli Hebrei non abitano in molti lochi, il che non occorre, et accade nella città di Venetia, ove l'usura è solo di cinque per cento, e li banchi sono erretti per la comodità della povertà, e non per proffitto de banchieri, e l'uso delle arti li è prohibito insieme con il possesso de beni stabili, supplendo a loro bisogni il negotio e traffico, di modo che a niuno stato, et ordine della città sono gravi, e molesti.

Ma oltre di ciò con gran verisimilitudine si può indagare la causa d'alcune espulsioni notabili degli Hebrei. In molte città della Germania seguì a tempo di Gottifredo con l'occasione della Cruciata per l'espeditioe di Terra Santa, onde quella soldatesca infervorita contra qualunque nazione differente dalla christiana, essequì nelli miseri Hebrei memorabili, e compassionevoli eccidii, ove non fu loco quasi all'esilio, il che poi si abituò nell'animo di popoli l'odio, e l'avversione contra la nazione. [87v] In Francia nel tempo istesso che occorse la strage de cavalieri templari, forno anco contro li Hebrei fulminati severissimi decretii di confiscationi, et esilii, per le cause accenate nelle historie.

Da Spagna furono scacciati a tempo di Re Ferdinando e Regina Isabela, dopo la soggettione de mori granatini, e se vi concorse altra causa, che puro zelo di religione si può conietturare ch'essendo li loro regni ripieni di mori, e maomettani, benché in apparenza christiani, non li compliva trattenere ne loro regni una massa sì grande d'Hebrei, e mori divisi dalla comune religione, ché gli Hebrei soli ascendevano al numero di mezzo millione come ho detto. Onde facilmente poteva fra dette nationi passare alcuna intelligenza di solevatione, come egualmente suddite soggiogate e mal contente. E sebbene ciò realmente non fu, vi era apparenza bastante d'insospetire quelli Principi, per il che fecero resolutione per diminuire la gelosia, piuttosto bandire li Hebrei che li mori, essendoli questi più necessari a suoi regni per l'agricoltura, et essercitio dell'arti, di che ne erano privi gli Hebrei, oltre di ciò per non irritare quel popolo, che ancora riteniva la sua primiera ferocità, e che aveva capo potentissimo della sua propria religione.

one of the three following ways: first, with usury, as they do in some Italian and German cities; second, by [87r] practising the common crafts of the city; third, as in the Levant, with income from the rents of real estate.

Usury causes the Jews to be equally disliked by all ranks within the city. The practice of crafts [makes them disliked] by the populace, and the possession of real estate [makes them disliked] by the nobility and the great men of the city. These are the essential and compelling reasons why the Jews do not dwell in many places. But this does not occur in the city of Venice, where usury remains at only five per cent and loan-banks have been established for the benefit of the poor and not for the profit of the moneylenders. In addition, the practice of crafts is prohibited for Jews, as is the possession of real estate. Commerce and trade supply their needs such that they are not troublesome or burdensome to any state or rank in the city.

But beyond this, one can plausibly investigate the cause of some notable expulsions of Jews. In the time of Godfrey, during the crusade for the Holy Land, it happened in many German cities that the crusaders, aroused against any nation that was not Christian, carried out an unforgettable and pitiful massacre of the unfortunate Jews. Then there was almost no need to resort to exile.<sup>406</sup> Since then, the mind of the populace has become accustomed to hatred and aversion towards the Jewish Nation. [87v] In France, at the same time as the massacre of the Templar knights occurred, the most severe decrees of confiscation and exile were promulgated against the Jews, for the reasons mentioned in the histories.

The Jews were driven out of Spain in the time of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, after the subjugation of the Moors of Granada. And if there was another cause to which these actions could be attributed beyond pure religious zeal, one can conjecture that since their kingdoms were full of Moors and Mohammedans, although Christians in appearance, the rulers did not wish to have such a large group of Jews and Moors who did not share the common religion in their kingdoms. For the Jews alone amounted to a population of half a million, as I have said.<sup>407</sup> Wherefore some plotting of rebellion could easily happen among the aforementioned nations, since they had all been subjected and were subjugated and discontented. However, although this did not actually happen, appearances alone were sufficient to make those princes suspicious. They therefore resolved to banish the Jews rather than the Moors in order to dissipate the jealousy, the latter being more useful to their kingdoms for agriculture and the practice of crafts, of which the Jews were deprived. And in addition to this, they refrained from banishing [the Moors] so as not to irritate a people that still retained its original ferocity and whose religion was guided by a most powerful Sultan.

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**406** The interpretation here is slightly problematic. The one inserted in the text seems the most plausible and is also acknowledged by Dante Lattes (*Ma'amar*, 150 and 214 n. 219). Otherwise, one should interpret the original Italian “esilio” as “escape” – so that there was no escape left – which seems difficult to justify literally. Perhaps Luzzatto is being bitterly ironic here.

**407** See consideration XI, 39v and particularly consideration XIV, 57r.

In quanto poi al Re di Portogallo, che d'indi a poco fece il simile contro la nazione, **[88r]** oltre alla continua persuasione delli suddetti Ferdinando, et Isabella, quel tentativo fu piuttosto indrizzato, et ebbe mira alla conversione che alla esclusione, et esilio, e ciò fu che possedendo egli per mezzo della navigatione molti paesi nella costa d'Africa, e disegnando far di nuovo altri acquisti nell'Indie, e dilatar il suo dominio molto oltre, li bisognava impiegare molta gente per supplire a tali espeditioni e populationi, essendo lui esausto di suditti per la picciolezza, et angustia del suo regno, ch'era una portione non troppo grande della Spagna per se stessa poco habitabile. Onde procurò di convertire alla religione christiana numero grande d'Hebrei ch'allhora si ritrovavano nel suo regno capitati con l'occasione dell'esilio di Ferdinando, et Isabella sudetti, e ciò fece per amassarli, et aggregarli al suo proprio popolo, e servirsene nelle sue imprese, navigationi, e colonie, né si curò della violenza usata in materia di fede e religione, onde publicò un fiero e crudele editto di repentino esilio, e totale confiscatione de beni contra quelli che non volessero consentirli alla detta conversione come nell'historia dell'eloquentissimo Osorio tale avvenimento è narrato. E li riuscì che centinaia di migliaia si disposero, e si risolsero ad ubbidirlo, e la minor parte si sbandò, e presero volontario esilio. **[88v]** Questo è quanto si può discorrere, circa le cause di simili eventi, lontani da nostri tempi, et involti nelle tenebre d'imperscrutabili cuori de Prencipi.

A short while later, the king of Portugal similarly acted against the Nation.<sup>408</sup> **[88r]** Aside from being persuaded by the aforementioned Ferdinand and Isabella, he endeavoured to enforce conversion rather than ordering banishment and exile. This happened because his ships had already brought many countries on the coast of Africa into his possession. And so he planned once again to make new acquisitions in the Indies and to spread his dominion much further. [To do so] he needed many people to furnish such expeditions and populations, particularly since he had exhausted the available subjects [in his land], a result of the smallness and narrowness of his kingdom, which only formed a small portion of Spain and was not too habitable. He thus tried to convert a large number of Jews to the Christian religion, Jews that were then found in his kingdom, having arrived there as a result of the exile by the aforementioned Ferdinand and Isabella. He did this to gather them and join them to his own people, and to make use of them in his own undertakings, navigations, and colonies. He did not care whether violence was used in matters of faith and religion. Thus, he published a cruel edict for the spontaneous exile and total confiscation of the possessions of those who did not wish to obey the said conversion, as is narrated in the *History* of the most eloquent Osorius.<sup>409</sup> And he succeeded, for hundreds of thousands were resolved to obey him, and the smaller part dispersed, preferring voluntary exile. **[88v]** This is what can be said about the causes of such events, far from our times and enveloped in the dark, inscrutable hearts of princes.

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**408** See glossary. See also Cecil Roth, *A History of the Marranos* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1932); Yosef H. Yerushalmi, *The Lisbon Massacre of 1506 and the Royal Image in the Shebet Yehudah* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1976). Yirmiyahu Yovel, *The Other Within: The Marranos; Split Identity and Emerging Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

**409** See glossary.

## CONSIDERATIONE XVIII

### ***Si tratta della dispersione degli Hebrei, e si da relatione del loro stato sotto diversi potentati, e numero loro***

Li popoli, e nationi hanno prescritti li loro periodi non meno che tutte l'altre cose mondane, prevenuti che sono alla sommità del fausto, et applauso, traboccano poi nell'abisso dell'oblio. Disse il poeta:

*Muoiono le Città, Muoiono i Regni.  
Copre i fasti e le pompe arena et erba.*

E siccome due sono le maniere del finimento delle cose, l'una con il corrompersi affatto, et in altra trasformarsi, ovvero ritenendo la propria essentia, frangersi e deformare la semplice figura, con solutione del continuo, com'il vetro franto, e l'acqua divisa, nelli stessi modi si disfano, e finiscono le nationi. La caldea, la persa, la greca, la romana, e tutta la gentilità, affatto si abolirono, e si dileguarono, et in nuova metamorfosi si trasformarono, onde di alcune d'esse, hoggi solamente ne sappiamo il nome, e delle altre, se risserba a guisa di [89r] tavolato sfuggito dal naufraggio alcuni fragmenti delle loro memorie.

La hebrea non li occorse simili mutationi, e cangiamenti, ma bene si spezzò, e fu divisa quasi in infinite portioni, distrata, e dispersa per tutto l'universo, restandole in gran parte l'identità della sua essentialità. E non è dubbio, che per se stessa non haverebbe avuto tanto vigore di oppondersi alla edacità del tempo, et esimersi dalli suoi fieri insulti per sì lungo tratto di 1600 anni in circa, ma ciò dipende dal volere della Divina Maestà, perservandola a fini a lui manifesti. E sebbene la captività, e dispersione è il maggior flagello che possi occorrere a popolo e nazione, rendendola vile, et abietta, scherno, et irrisione delle genti, nulla di meno è rimedio efficacissimo per la duratione, e perservatione, levando alli precipi dominanti la gelosia, et il sospetto, et al popolo distratto, l'orgoglio, e la iattanza divenendo perciò umile e pieghevole.

## CONSIDERATION XVIII

### *Relating to the Dispersion of the Jews, with a Report on Their Number and Condition under Different Powers*

The lifetimes of peoples and nations are prescribed, no differently to all other terrestrial things. When they arrive at the height of fortune and approval, they shall be cast down into the abyss of oblivion. As the Poet said:

*Cities are dying, so also kingdoms  
Sand and herbs are covering splendours and glitzes.*<sup>410</sup>

And so there are two ways in which things can end: either by complete corruption, or through transformation into something else. Transformation happens either with the thing retaining its own essence or when its simple shape is smashed and deformed, with a break in its continuity, like broken glass or divided water. In the same way, nations collapse and come to an end. Chaldea, Persia, Greece, Rome, and all the heathen states have entirely disappeared and vanished, transformed themselves, and taken a new shape. As a consequence, today we only know the names of some of them, and of others there remain only fragments of memory, similar to the [89r] planking that has broken away from a shipwreck.

The Jewish Nation did not experience such mutations and changes, but was shattered and divided into an almost infinite number of portions, scattered and dispersed throughout the whole universe. Nonetheless, it largely held on to the identity of its essentiality.<sup>411</sup> And there is no doubt that by itself it would not have displayed such vigour in opposing the ravenous power of time and in gaining exemption from the cruel insults heaped upon it for the notably long period of around 1,600 years.<sup>412</sup> That depended on the will of the Divine Majesty, who preserved the Nation for reasons manifest only to Him. And although captivity and dispersion are the greatest calamities that can occur to a people and a nation, rendering it vile and abject and exposing it to the contempt and scorn of peoples, it is a most efficacious promoter of endurance and preservation; it removes jealousy and suspicion from the ruling princes and pride and boastfulness from the dispersed people, who consequently become humble and docile.

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**410** Tasso, *Gerusalemme liberata* 15.20 (translated by the editors). Luzzatto quotes the same verses at the end of the *Socrates* (Luzzatto, *Socrates*, 355).

**411** See Giuseppe Veltri, “‘Identity of Essentiality of the Jewish People’: The Diaspora and the Political Theories of Simone Luzzatto in the Jewish Thought of the 20th Century,” *Civiltà del Mediterraneo* n.s., 12, nos. 23–24 (June–December 2013): 149–80.

**412** See consideration XI, 38r and 39v, where Luzzatto mentions 1,550 years of dispersion.



Li dottori antichi hebrei, osservarono, che Balaam per avanti fiero nemico del popolo hebreo volendolo poi benedire per rendersi in apparenza ossequente a Iddio l'assimigliò all'arbore di cedro altissimo e robusto, et Hachià silonita hebreo pronosticandoli alcun male lo rassembrò alla canna palustre che si move ad ogni [89v] vento. Onde dicono li dottori, che fu meglio il minaccio, e l'esacratione del silonita profeta verace e pio, comparandoli alla canna pieghevole, e flessibile, e che cede ad ogni violenza, e perciò resiste intiera, che la benedittione del scelerato pseuprofeta, che li raffigurò al cedro, che facendo forza all'empito, e furia di turbi, e vehementi spirationi de venti, sovente insin da radici è svelto:

*Flectitur obsequio curvatus ab arbore ramus:*

*Frangis, si vires experiere tuas.*

La quale dispersione non solamente li ha giovato in renderli ossequenti a superiori, ma anco li ha difeso dall'innovationi de dogmi, e riti, non potendo serpeggiare, et invadere tutto l'universale per la divisione, e distrattione delle parti integranti della natione.

In quanto al numero degli Hebrei non si può diffinirlo precisamente non havendo n'anco ferma notitia de lochi ove dimorano. In quanto alle dieci tribù, che furono captivati da Salmanassar innanzi la distruttione del primo Tempio, non si sa di loro certa novella ancor che sia il mondo oggidì tutto indagato e scoperto, e principiando dalla parte orientale, sappiamo che sotto il re di Persia se ne ricovra quantità grande, e con mediocre libertà. Nel Stato del Signore turcho è la principale stanza della natione non solo per [90r] l'antica loro habitatione, ma anco per il concorso d'Hebrei sbandati da Spagna, ché gran portione di loro alla fine capitorono sotto quel dominio.

E la causa di tal riduzione fu primieramente per il libero uso della loro religione per la connivenza ordinaria de Turchi verso qualunque altra aliena dalla loro, e ritrovandosi una quantità infinita de Greci, et osservatori d'altri riti, non si fa riflessione alcuna sopra gli Hebrei, oltre che li è permesso il possesso de beni stabili, e qualunque altra professione, e non vi essendo nobiltà non si pone il tenere terreni in consideratione, oltre che da Greci anco ne sono posseduti in gran parte,

The ancient Jewish sages observed that Balaam, previously a great enemy of the Jewish people, later wanted to bless them in order to apparently render himself deferential to God. He compared [the people] to a very high and robust cedar.<sup>413</sup> And the Shilonite Jew Ahijah, predicting that some evil would befall them, compared them to reeds in a swamp, which move with every [89v] wind.<sup>414</sup> [With regard to this comparison,] the sages state that the threats and execrations of the sincere and pious Shilonite prophet, comparing the Jews to a pliant and flexible reed that yields to every violence and therefore remains intact, were better than the blessing of the wicked pseudo-prophet, who compared them to a cedar which, while being resistant to storms and the vehement blowing of the winds, is often ultimately uprooted:

*By compliance is the curved bough bent away from the tree;  
you will break it if you try your strength.*<sup>415</sup>

This dispersion has not only aided them by rendering them deferential to their superiors, but also defended them from innovation in dogmas and rites, which could not insinuate into or penetrate the entire Nation because of the division of its integral parts.

As for the number of the Jews, one cannot precisely determine it, not even having firm knowledge of the places in which they dwell. Regarding the ten tribes that were captured by Salmanesser before the destruction of the First Temple, we have no certain information about them,<sup>416</sup> despite the fact that today all the world is being explored and new places are being discovered. Beginning with the eastern region, we know that a great number of them found shelter with tolerable liberty under the king of Persia. The state of the Turkish ruler is now the principal dwelling place of the Nation, not only because of [90r] their long-standing residence, but also because of the arrival of the Jews banished from Spain, since a great portion of them finally gathered in that dominion.

This happened primarily because of the free exercise of their religion granted by the Turks,<sup>417</sup> in their usual tolerance towards any foreign religion. And since there was a vast number of Greeks and observers of other rites, no specific attention was paid to the Jews. Furthermore, they are permitted to possess real estate and to exercise other professions. Since there is no aristocracy [there], the possession of land is not held in esteem; and land is even owned to a great extent by the Greeks,

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<sup>413</sup> Numbers 24:6.

<sup>414</sup> 1 Kings 14:15.

<sup>415</sup> Ovid, *The Art of Love* II:179–80.

<sup>416</sup> Giuseppe Veltri, “‘The East’ in the Story of the Lost Tribes: Creation of Geographical and Political Utopias,” in *Creation and Re-Creation in Jewish Thought*, ed. Peter Schäfer and Rachel Elior (Tübingen: Mohr, 2005), 249–69.

<sup>417</sup> We are following Lattes’s translation (*Ma’amar*, 152).

l'istessi per il più sono ancor applicati all'arti operarie, e li Turchi alla militia et al governo de popoli attendono, di modo che non se li dà occasione d'odio e rissa. Si potrebbe dire che la conformità della circoncisione cagionasse alcuna amichevole corrispondenza, ma ciò non è vero, perché l'esperienza insegna che li popoli in parte comunicanti de riti, et in parte differenti, meno convengono insieme, che li assolutamente distinti, e divisi.

In Costantinopoli, e Salonichi, vi ne è maggior numero, che in altre città, e si giudica in queste due solamente esserne più di 80 mila, e si stima che sotto l'Imperio turchesco passano li miglioni. In Terra Santa, et in particolare Hierusalem vi capita annualmente non [90v] solamente numero grande d'Hebrei di tutte le nationi del mondo, ma ancora grossissima quantità de renditi annuali, che li vien offerto per mantener poveri, e sostenere accademie.

In la Germania sotto l'Imperatore, vi ne sono gran quantità, ma molto più in Polonia, Russia, e Lituania, ove vi sono accademie, et università di migliaia di gioveni, e s'esercitano nelle leggi civili, e canoniche de Hebrei, havendo in quelle regioni libera potestà di giudicare qualunque differenza e controversia sì civile come criminale, che accade fra la natione.

Sotto li dominii divisi dalla Chiesa romana, per il più non vi stantiano Hebrei, certa cosa è che la natione hebrea in alcuni articoli inclina alla romana più che alla loro opinione. Tengono gli Hebrei la Scrittura Sacra in molti lochi non esser intelligibile senza il lume delle traditioni, facendo gran stima e fondamento sopra esse, come ho già dimostrato. Credono ancora che grande sia il valore dell'opere meritorie appresso Iddio, et in esse grandemente si essercitano, accompagnandoli però con la fede. Asseriscono il libero arbitrio, e lo stimano essere articolo principale delle loro credenze. Affermano parimente, che li meriti altrui possino coadi[u]vare alli imperfetti, e li vivi [91r] prelgano per l'anime de morti. Dicono la giustificatione del penitente esser reale, e non putativa, et assolutoria, come ha tenuto Calvino. E sebbene non hanno il nome di Purgatorio frequente nelli loro autori tripartiscono gli avvenimenti delle anime separate alla beatitudine, alle pene temporali finite, et alle eterne, tenendo ch'Iddio assolva la colpa, ma tuttavia esige la pena. Le loro orationi si fanno in lingua hebraica, non in volgare. Le qual cose nel trattato delli dogmi, e riti sono discussi, e ventilati.

Tuttavia ne Paesi Bassi sono con grandissima carità, et amorevolezza trattati, come in Amstradamo, Retrodamo, et Amburgo di Olssatia,

who, for the most part, devote themselves to handicrafts. The Turks attend to the military and the governing of the people in such a way that no occasion is given for hatred and violence. One might suggest that the shared rite of circumcision would lead to a peaceful relationship, but this is not true, since experience teaches that people who have some rites in common and others that are dissimilar get along less well than those whose practices are absolutely distinct and separate.

In Constantinople and Salonika, there are a greater number of Jews than in other cities; it is estimated that in these two alone there are over eighty thousand and it is estimated that in the Turkish empire there are more than several million Jews. In the Holy Land, and in particular Jerusalem, not [90v] only do a great number of Jews from all the countries of the earth arrive annually, but they are also provided with a very great sum of annual revenue in order to maintain the poor and to sustain academies.

In Imperial Germany, there are a great number of them, but there are many more in Poland, Russia, and Lithuania. There are academies and universities for thousands of young people who are trained in civil law and the canon law of the Jews, since those regions allow the free judgment of all differences and controversies, both civil and criminal, that occur within the Nation.

For the most part, the Jews do not reside in the dominions separated from the Roman church. It is certain that in some matters the Jewish Nation inclines to the Roman opinion more than to their beliefs.<sup>418</sup> The Jews maintain that in many places the Sacred Scripture is not intelligible without the light of tradition, placing great value on it, and relying on it, as I have already demonstrated. They also believe that meritorious deeds please God, and they practice them very often, accompanied, however, with faith. They believe in free will, and they consider it to be a principal article of their beliefs; they likewise affirm that the merits of others can be of help to those who are less deserving, and that the living [91r] pray for the souls of the dead. They say that the penance of the penitent is real, and not simply putative, that it bestows absolution, as Calvin believed. And even though their authors do not frequently mention the word “purgatory,” they divide the fate of the separated soul into three parts: beatitude, finite temporal punishment, and the eternal. For they believe that God absolves guilt, but He still exacts punishment. Their prayers are in the Hebrew language, not in the vernacular. All these things are discussed and examined in the treatise on dogmas and rites.

Nevertheless, they [the Jews] are treated with great compassion and kindness in the Low Countries, as in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Hamburg in Holstein, be-

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<sup>418</sup> See Giuseppe Veltri, “...in einigen Glaubenartikeln neigt die jüdische Nation eher zur römischen Kirche”: Jüdische Gelehrten über Reformation und Gegenreformation,” in *Katholizismus und Judentum. Gemeinsamkeiten und Verwerfungen vom 16. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Giuseppe Veltri and Hubert Wolf (Regensburg: Pustet, 2005), 15–29.

per essere dominii, che per la floridezza della professione mercantile, concedeno humano hospitio a tutti.

Verso occidente poi non resta altro che l'Italia, e nella costa di Africa il regno di Fessa, e Marocco. In quanto all'Italia sono universalmente da Principi che li ricettono protetti, e favoriti, et osservati li loro indulti, e privilegi, senza alcuna alteratione, che per esser ciò sotto l'occhio d'ognuno non occorre ch'io vi allungo, e credo arrivare al numero di venticinquemila. In Marocco, e Fessa, et altre città [91v] circonvicini non sottoposti al dominio del Turcho vi ne sono numero grandissimo, essendovi anco in quelle parti capitati dalli esilii di Castiglia, e Portogallo per la vicinanza de lochi. Si dice esservene un'infinità in paesi Mediteranei dell'Africa, che per essere paese poco praticato, et ignoto non si può limitarne il numero con certezza.

L'opinioni, e dogmi di tutta questa natione cosi divisa, dilaniata, e smembrata sono uniformi, li riti cerimoniali sono l'istessi, in alcune cose non essenziali poco dissimili. Onde Aman nemico della natione disse al re Assuero, *est populus unus dispersus per omnes Provincias regni*,<sup>77</sup> con tante calunnie ch'aggregò non potè occultar questa conditione dell'uniformità, differenti solo ne costumi, diversità considerabile per la ragione sopra accenata.

Quest'è quanto mi è sovvenuto a dire in proposito di questa natione in quanto appartiene all'interesse de principi, e popoli che la ricovrano, et in particolare della Serenissima Republica Venetiana, che con tanta benignità la riceve nelli suoi Stati, e protegge con la solita sua giustitia e clemenza, abborrendo essa, e detestando in ogni sua attione quell'ingiusto, et inhumano detto dall'impio statista<sup>78</sup> Photino al giovine imperito Re Tolomeo proferito, come cantò Lucano:

[92r] *Dat poenas laudata fides, cum sustinet,” inquit*  
*“Quos fortuna premit, fatis accede deisque,*  
*Et cole felices, miseros fuge. Sidera terra,*  
*Ut distant et flamma mari, sic utile recto.*

Il qual pronuntiato, produsse la prodizione de maggior guerriero, che viveva a quel secolo, dico l'uccisione del magno Pompeo, che con la sua decapitatione fu iugulata, e recisa la cervice della romana libertà, et erresse un monumento d'infamia eterna a chi assenti a sì esecranda sentenza.

77 Esther 3:8: “Est populus per omnes provincias regni tui dispersus.”

78 Statista: emendato il refuso “stastita.”

cause these are places that, on account of the prosperity of the mercantile profession, grant refuge to all.

Towards the west, there remains only Italy, and on the coast of Africa, the kingdoms of Fez and Morocco. As far as Italy is concerned, [the Jews] are universally protected and favoured by the princes who receive them, and their general pardons and privileges are honoured as they stand. And because this is visible to everyone, it is not necessary for me to elaborate on it [here]. I believe the Jews in Italy to amount to a number of twenty-five thousand. In Morocco and Fez and other surrounding [91v] cities not under Turkish dominion, there are very large numbers of them, those exiled from Castile and Portugal having also come to those parts, because of the proximity of such places. It is said that there is a considerably greater number of Jews in the Mediterranean parts of Africa. However, since these countries are less frequented and virtually unknown, one cannot determine the number with certainty.

The opinions and dogmas of this entire Nation, so divided, torn apart, and split up, are uniform; the ceremonial rites are the same, and only slightly dissimilar with regard to some non-essentials. As Haman, the enemy of the Nation, said to Ahasveros: *“There is a certain people dispersed in all the provinces of the Kingdom.”*<sup>419</sup> Although he told many great lies, he could not conceal this uniformity, for the Jews differ only in custom, a diversity stemming from the reasons mentioned above.

This is what it has occurred to me to report in connection with that Nation with regard to the interests of princes and peoples who admit them, and in particular of the Most Serene Republic of Venice, which receives them into its state with such benevolence and protects them with its usual justice and clemency. For it abhors and detests the unjust and inhuman statement of the impious statesman Photinus,<sup>420</sup> uttered to the young inexperienced King Ptolemy.<sup>421</sup> As Lucan sang:

[92r] *We praise loyalty, but it pays the price when it supports those  
whom Fortune crushes. Take the side of destiny and heaven,  
and court the prosperous but shun the afflicted. Expediency is  
as far from the right as the stars from earth or fire from water.*<sup>422</sup>

These words incited treachery against the greatest warrior who lived in that century, that is, they led to the killing of Pompey the Great. With his decapitation, the head of Roman liberty was cut off, and a monument of eternal infamy was erected to those who assented to so execrable a sentence.

419 Esther 3:8. Hebrew: ישנו עם-אחד מפורד ומפורד בין העמים, בכול מדינות מלכותך.

420 See glossary.

421 See glossary.

422 Lucan, *The Civil War* VIII:485–88.

Ma sempre ossequendo essa Serenissima Republica quel pronostico admonittivo espresso da prudentissimo padre a pio figliolo (come finge Virgilio) che partorì poi le grandezze, e glorie del popolo romano, ché forse un giorno per benignità de cieli, siccome la Republica delle cui virtù è gareggiatrice così potrebbe esserne emula de trionfi:

*Tu regere Imperio populos, Romane, memento  
(hae tibi erunt artes) pacique imponere morem,  
parcere subiectis et debellare superbos.*

IL FINE

But this Most Serene Republic always respects the prediction and exhortation made by the very prudent father to his pious son,<sup>423</sup> who, as Virgil imagines, then gave birth to the greatness and glory of the Roman people. For it may well be that one day, through the kindness of the heavens, the Republic, which rivals Rome in virtue, can also emulate its triumphs:

*Remember thou, O Roman, to rule the nations with thy sway  
– these shall be thine arts – to crown peace with Law,  
to spare the humbled, and to tame in war the proud!*<sup>424</sup>

THE END

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**423** Anchises to Aeneas.

**424** Virgil, *Aeneid* VI:851–53.





Benjamin Ravid

# The Venetian Context of the *Discourse*

I would judge it neither a bold nor a dissonant proposition to say that the Jews have offered some considerable profit to the illustrious city of Venice. Likewise, the proposition that they should be considered part and parcel of the city's common population should not be offensive to the delicate sentiment of even the most scrupulous of souls (*Discourse*, 7r).

I will merely add an exposition concerning some of the profits that the Jewish Nation living in the illustrious city of Venice has brought [to that city]. With this, I do not intend to offer any ambitious estimate of profits and gains; rather I only wish to demonstrate that this Nation is anything but a useless part of the general population of this city. And thus, even those least experienced in worldly affairs will be partially informed about the true motives and impulses that make this extremely prudent and just Republic inclined to yield and provide a protected residence and shelter for the [Jewish] Nation in such a noble and illustrious city of trade. [The Republic] will likewise protect it like a father from the insults of others. With this knowledge, I hope that the above-mentioned [least experienced people in worldly affairs] will become less hostile and even more amicable and peaceable towards the Jewish Nation (*Discourse*, 5v).

## 1 Simone Luzzatto

Time has not been kind to the memory of the Venetian rabbi Simone Luzzatto (ca. 1582–1663). During his life-time he was the most illustrious rabbi and Jewish humanist in Venice along with his slightly older and more prolific contemporary Leone Modena (1571–1648). Yet almost nothing was known about his personal life, his writings were seldom mentioned until the later nineteenth century, and he remained in the shadows until the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup>

Recent research in the Archivio di Stato di Venezia has established that Simone Luzzatto was a member of a very extensive, prominent, and wealthy family.<sup>2</sup> His father, Isaac Luzzatto (c. 1540–1645) held the propriety right to rental property in

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<sup>1</sup> For a brief biography of Simone Luzzatto, see Veltri, “Individual Responsibility,” below, 278–80, and in more detail, Giuseppe Veltri, “Saggio introduttivo,” in Giuseppe Veltri, ed., *Simone Luzzatto: Scritti politici e filosofici di un ebreo scettico nella Venezia del seicento* (Milan: Bompiani, 2013), XXII–LXXXIX, XX–XXVIII.

<sup>2</sup> See the very important study of Paola Ferruta, “Simone Luzzatto e la sua cerchia familiare: questioni di affari, parentela e vita privata,” in Veltri, *Filosofo e rabbino*, 309–71 with trees of the extended family, 369–71, and also the documents in part III, “Studi storici e documenti inediti dall’Archivio di Stato di Venezia,” by Gianfranco Miletto, Paola Ferruta, and Giuseppe Veltri in cooperation with Carla Boccato, 373–479.

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the ghetto that was owned by Christians,<sup>3</sup> engaged in international maritime trade, was involved in companies that issued maritime insurance,<sup>4</sup> and operated one of the three loan banks that the Venetian government required the Jews to maintain in the ghetto.<sup>5</sup> Isaac was also active in selling *strazzaria*, literally rags but by extension second-hand clothing and a wide range of other pre-owned items, including household furnishings that had to be made by hand prior to the industrial revolution when relatively inexpensive mass-produced items first became available. Jewish activity in the *strazzaria* trade in Venice preceded the establishment of the ghetto in 1516 and was authorised in the charters granted by the Venetian government to the Jews. Its importance can be deduced from the fact that as a rule the Venetian government did not allow Jews to engage in any activity in which a Christian guild existed.<sup>6</sup> *Strazzaria* items were sought out by a large part of the population, as well as visitors to the city, and ultimately by the Venetian government itself. The extent of the resources that Isaac had at his disposal can be seen from the sum that he spent on the wedding of his son Simone and the dowries that he provided for his daughters.<sup>7</sup> Understandably, because of his wealth, activities and family connections, Isaac was a prominent leader in the Jewish community. He was a member of the Small Assembly, the executive committee of the Jewish community and at least once, one of its presidents, and also served on the committee that negotiated the rechartering of the Jewish moneylenders in 1618 and 1629.<sup>8</sup>

Isaac's son Simone clearly benefitted from his father's position, experience and wealth as well as from his family connections. He was involved in the maritime insurance business as well as in the management of rental property in the ghetto. He apparently participated in other of his father's activities, since in 1627 he was granted authorization to serve as his father's legal representative to deposit and withdraw money from the Mint (*Zecca*).<sup>9</sup> In a declaration to the *Dieci savi sopra le*

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<sup>3</sup> Since Jews had been forbidden to own real estate in Venice since 1423, the reference was either to housing units to which Jews held hereditary propriety rights or to units that they had constructed at their own expense on existing buildings.

<sup>4</sup> On real estate, see Veltri, *Filosofo e rabbino*, 434–35, and on maritime insurance, Ferruta, “Simone Luzzatto,” 350–51 and Veltri, *Filosofo e rabbino*, 430–33.

<sup>5</sup> See David J. Malkiel, *A Separate Republic: The Mechanics and Dynamics of Venetian Jewish Self-Government, 1607–1624* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1991), 423–24.

<sup>6</sup> See Brian Pullan, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice: The Social Institutions of a Catholic State, to 1620* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 548–49 and Ferruta, “Simone Luzzatto,” 349. Interestingly, in the *Discourse* Luzzatto did not mention this significant activity, although he alluded to it in the eighth consideration when discussing the obligation of the Jews to furnish palaces (see below).

<sup>7</sup> See Ferruta, “Simone Luzzatto,” 351–63, and the numerous documents in Veltri, *Filosofo e rabbino*.

<sup>8</sup> See Malkiel, *A Separate Republic*, 370, n. 4.

<sup>9</sup> On the *Zecca*, see Ferruta, “Simone Luzzatto,” 351 and Veltri, *Filosofo e rabbino*, 413. Luzzatto must have been a capable administrator, since a Venetian noble-woman to whom he paid his rent authorised him to administer a maximum of 250 ducats from her account in the Banco di Giro; see Ferruta, “Simone Luzzatto,” 351 and “Studi storici,” 425.

*decime*, the magistracy responsible for assessing the real estate tax in Venice, in 1660 he declared a gross income of 151 ducats from rental property, of which 88 were paid to the Christian landlords.<sup>10</sup>

In his youth Simone excelled in rabbinic studies. He was ordained a rabbi in 1606, and in this capacity his name appeared in the approbations (*haskamot*) at the beginning of Hebrew books and on rabbinic responsa.<sup>11</sup> He was a member of the *yeshivah kelalit* (general academy) of the Jewish community of Venice and eventually, apparently in accordance with the Venetian custom of appointing the head (*gaon*) on the principle of seniority, he succeeded Leone Modena as its head around the time of Modena's death in 1648.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, he also signed "attestations drafted by the 'Jewish confraternity for prisons' (*Fraterna delli Hebrei sopra li prigioni*), authorising specific prisoners to receive bread for free, on account of their need, and was active in collecting funds for the Land of Israel."<sup>13</sup>

Simone Luzzatto served for many years as the rabbi of the *Scuola Grande Tedesca*. His sermons were mentioned in the inventory of the estate of his grandson and heir Moisè, but subsequently they dropped out of view.<sup>14</sup> Hopefully, some day they may be serendipitously found in some previously unconsulted location, along with other writings of his. His Hebrew rabbinic writings, however, were apparently never collected and certainly, with a very few exceptions, never published, though they can be found in various published and manuscript collections of others.<sup>15</sup> For example, one controversial ruling of his was referred to in *Paḥad Yiṣṣḥaq*, a posthumous multi-volume Hebrew rabbinic encyclopedia compiled by the 18th century Livornese rabbi, Isaac Lampronti (1679–1756). Lampronti related that

The great rabbi, Simone Luzzatto in Venice, a righteous teacher, made a most learned ruling to prove that it was permissible to cross by boat on the Sabbath from one side to the other, and he presented the ruling to the Small Council [of the Jewish community of Venice] in the presence of all the great Rabbis who were there in those days, and after reflection they voted to forbid it and ordered that the ruling should not be shown to anyone, telling him that even though to permit is more desirable [than to forbid] and the way of wisdom, it is never wise to permit through reason things that seem forbidden to the masses.<sup>16</sup>

10 "Studi storici," 434–35.

11 For a list of his approbations, see Malkiel, *A Separate Republic*, 263–64, and 190, n. 118.

12 The institution of the *yeshivah kelalit* in Venice awaits a comprehensive investigation.

13 See Makiel, "A Separate Republic," 190 n. 119 and 565 n. 1.

14 See Veltri, *Filosofo e rabbino*, 406 and 407.

15 Veltri, "Individual Responsibility," 7–8, and in greater detail, "Saggio introduttivo," XXVIII–XXXVII.

16 Isaac Lampronti, *Paḥad Yiṣṣḥaq* (Lyck: Mekitze Nirdamim, 1866), 7:58b. See Giuseppe Veltri and Anna Lissa, "Come attraversar il canale restando fermi: un responso famoso di Simone Luzzatto nell'enciclopedia di Isacco Lampronti," in *Nuovi studi su Isacco Lampronti, Storia, poesia, scienza e halakah*, ed. Mauro Perani (Florence: La Giuntina, 2017), 259–68, Italian translation of the text of Lampronti on 264. Apparently Rabbi Isaiah di Trani ben Mali (ca. 1180–1250) used to travel by gondola on the Sabbath, basing the permissibility of his action on the Jewish legal principle of "they are doing it for themselves" (*le-ʿašmam hem mitkawenim*), i.e., the non-Jewish gondoliers

This ruling, which Lampronti may not have actually seen but only heard about orally since he did not provide a source for it, is not only very interesting in itself, but also significant as an indication of tensions existing within the leadership of the Jewish community of Venice. Moreover, Lampronti's summary of the ruling was very important because *Paḥad Yiṣḥaq* was a text that was often consulted by rabbis, and thus a Hebrew text by Luzzatto entered into the main-stream of traditional Jewish learning. Like Leone Modena and a few other rabbinic contemporaries, Luzzatto developed a great interest in humanistic studies. In July 1604, he wrote to Rabbi Joshua Jacob ben Elchanan Heilbronn in Padua that "I am now very occupied with other matters. [...] I swear by God that I am so occupied with my other studies that I am unable to move from them even briefly [...] and with the help of God, after sukkot we will exalt in the love of our holy Torah, as my distinguished teacher will testify that now I have no time." This passage has been understood as meaning that Luzzatto was fully engaged in secular studies and did not have time to write on matters of Torah.<sup>17</sup> In 1622, he along with Issac Gherson and Leone Modena were characterised in a community document as being well-versed in the sciences (*versati nelle scienze*).<sup>18</sup> A few years later, in 1629, his contemporary, the astronomer, mathematician, physician, and philosopher Joseph Solomon Delmedigo (1591–1655) singled out Luzzatto as one of the only two or three contemporary Jews who were well-versed in mathematics and the sciences.<sup>19</sup> When complaining about the lack of knowledge of astronomy among the Jews in his day, Delmedigo noted two exceptions, the first of whom was "one in Venice, the great prince, rabbinic authority, and eminent rabbi, may God guard and preserve him." Luzzatto's contemporary, the seventeenth century Hebrew poet Jacob Frances (ca. 1618–after 1703) referred to "the rabbis of illustrious Venice, who are world renowned, and at their head is the greatest among them, the great Rabbi of Venice, our teacher and rabbi, my esteemed rabbi, the prominent Rabbi Simone Luzzatto."<sup>20</sup>

Luzzatto was active in Jewish communal affairs and on occasion represented the community in negotiations with the Venetian government. For example, from

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were undertaking their trips anyways and not specially for Jews, in which case it would be forbidden for the Jews to avail themselves of the service; see his contemporary Rabbi Zedekiah ben Abraham Anav (1210–ca. 1280) in his *Shibbole ha-Leket*, ed. Solomon Buber (Vilna: Rom Bros, 1886), 42. The Jews may have been using the gondolas for ferrying purposes across the Grand Canal rather than for undertaking actual journeys, and presumably any payment for the service was made either before the Sabbath started or after it ended.

<sup>17</sup> Joshua Jacob ben Elchanan Heilbronn, *Nahalat Ya'aqov* 41b (Padua: 1623–4) 41v–42r, reproduced in Shulvass, "Rabbi Simha Luzzatto," 9–10.

<sup>18</sup> See Malkiel, *A Separate Republic*, 203, 634–35.

<sup>19</sup> Introduction to *Sefer Ma'ayan Ganim* originally published in Amsterdam in 1629, with an approbation by four Venetian rabbis, starting with Leone Modena and Simone Luzzatto; second edition (Odessa: Beilinson, 1865), 131. See also Isaac Barzilay, *Yoseph Shlomo Delmedigo, Yashar of Candia: His Life, Works and Times* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 42 n. 4, 309, 312.

<sup>20</sup> Simon Bernstein, *The Divan of Emanuel ben David Frances* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1932), 144.

1636 to 1641 he played an important role in opposing the attempt of Marco Brolo, the Christian who owned much property in the Ghetto Nuovo, to increase the rent on the grounds that the Jews were treating that rented property in the ghetto as if it were their own, making improvements and enlargements and then profiting by subletting it to other Jews at much higher rental rates than they themselves were paying him.<sup>21</sup> Then in 1639–1641, he served as a member of the committee entrusted with negotiating the renewal of the charter of the Jewish moneylenders, and in that connection he became involved in the issue of the minimum age at which Jewish children could be converted to Christianity against their will or without the knowledge of their parents.<sup>22</sup> After Luzzatto and his fellow negotiators submitted their case in writing to the *Avogadori del Comun* on 7 November 1640, the Venetian noble Carlo Contarini replying on behalf of the House of Catechumens, referred to Luzzatto as the most renowned rabbi of his nation (*il più celebre rabbino della sua nazione*). Subsequently, in 1648, Luzzatto was appointed translator of Hebrew documents for the Venetian magistracy of the *Giudici del Proprio*, a position that he held for fourteen years until 1662 when he retired because of the infirmity of old age in favor of his grandson Moisè a year before his death in 1663.<sup>23</sup> Luzzatto was highly praised and warmly eulogised by Mahalalel Halevi of Ancona in a letter that he wrote to Venice. Mahalalel noted that “his house was open to the rich and poor [...] his feet were as swift as those of a deer to do the will of God, above all ransoming captives.”<sup>24</sup>

However, soon after his death Luzzatto became almost forgotten. To the extent that he was remembered, he was best known for his *Discorso sopra il stato degli Hebrei et in particular dimoranti nel inclita città di Venetia* (*Discourse on the State of the Jews and in Particular those Dwelling in the Illustrious city of Venice*), printed in Venice in 1638. This book had an impact during his lifetime. The prominent rabbi in Amsterdam, Menasseh ben Israel (1604–1657), in his *Humble Addresses Submitted*

<sup>21</sup> Published in “Studi storici,” 459–69; see also 337–38. Interestingly, in 1660, Luzzatto was renting property belonging to Marco Brolo; see Veltri, *Filosofo e rabbino*, 435 and also 423–24.

<sup>22</sup> See Benjamin Ravid, “The Forced Baptism of Jewish Minors in Early Modern Venice,” *Italia* 13–15 (2001): 268–78, photo-reproduced in Ravid, *Studies on the Jews of Venice, 1382–1797* (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> For the text of Luzzatto’s will and a sharp family dispute that dated back to 1632 and explains why his will was probated only in 1672, see Ferruta, “Simone Luzzatto,” 352–63, and for the text of his will, “Studi storici,” 376–79. On the position of official translators from Hebrew in Venice, see Benjamin Ravid, “Translators of the Hebrew Language’ for the Venetian Government and the Venetian Government as Preserver of Documents of the Venetian Jewish Community,” in *Tov Elem: Memory, Community and Gender: Essays in Honour of Robert Bonfil*, eds. Elisheva Baumgarten, Roni Weinstein, and Amnon Raz-Karkozkin (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute and the Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2011) 188–224. For Luzzatto’s resignation because of advancing old age, see “Studi storici,” 376–77.

<sup>24</sup> Simon Bernstein, “The Letters of Rabbi Mahalalel Halelujah of Ancona: A Chapter of the Cultural History of Italian Jewry,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 7 (1930): 497–536, 534; see also 504 and 506 n. 20.

to *Oliver Cromwell Seeking to Secure the Readmission of Jews to England* utilised passages from the *Discourse* virtually verbatim.<sup>25</sup> Shortly afterwards, in a speech delivered in the Venetian Senate in a successful attempt to ward off an otherwise unknown expulsion of the Jews around 1659, a Senator with the family name of Loredan, most likely Gian Francesco Loredan, cited the *Discourse* extensively as he strongly opposed the proposed expulsion and especially pointed out the economic benefits of retaining the Jews in Venice.<sup>26</sup>

In greater detail, Samuel Nahmias, better known as Giulio Morosini after his conversion to Christianity in Venice in 1649, in a work published in 1683 twice highly praised Luzzatto, whom he knew from the days before his conversion when both Simone Luzzatto and his father Isaac had been the associates of David and Isaac Nahmias (presumably the father and grandfather of Samuel Nahmias) in issuing maritime insurance.<sup>27</sup> Morosini related that Luzzatto had been “most esteemed for his Jewish erudition and also very well-thought of among Christians for his learning and eloquence” (“*stimatissimo per la lettura ebraica e anche appresso i Christiani grandemente accreditato per le scienze e per l’eloquenza*”). In a similar vein he asserted that Luzzatto “had been famous for his learning, eloquence, and authority” (“*ch’in Venetia era famoso per la dottrina, eloquenza e autorità*”). Nevertheless, that did not prevent him from strongly criticising a few of Luzzatto’s assertions in the *Discourse*.<sup>28</sup> Morosini was not the only Christian contemporary to criticise aspects of the *Discourse*. Melchiorre Palontrotti, in a small pamphlet published in 1649 but to all intents ignored until the later twentieth century, wrote a sharp criticism of certain points in the *Discourse*.<sup>29</sup>

The tract *Reasons for Naturalizing the Jews in Great Britain and Ireland on the same foot with all other nations. Containing also a defense of the Jews against all vulgar prejudices in all countries*, by the eighteenth century deist John Toland (1670–

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25 Benjamin Ravid, “How Profitable the Nation of the Jewes Are: The Humble Addresses of Menasseh ben Israel and the Discorso of Simone Luzzatto,” in *Mystics, Philosophers and Politicians. Essays in Jewish Intellectual History in Honor of Alexander Altmann*, eds. Jehuda Reinharz, Daniel Swetschinski and Kalman P. Bland (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1982): 159–80.

26 Giuseppe Veltri and Gianfranco Miletto, “Difesa inedita del senatore veneziano Loredan in favore degli ebrei nel 1659–60, basata sul Discorso di Simone Luzzatto,” in Veltri, *Filosofo e Rabbino*, 249–74. Some passages have been reproduced in the footnotes to the English translation of the *Discourse* in this volume.

27 See Veltri, *Filosofo e rabbino*, 426–30; also Benjamin Ravid, “Contra Judaeos,” 329–31, photo-reproduced in Ravid, *Studies on the Jews of Venice*, and Malkiel, *A Separate Republic*, 404 n. 4.

28 Giulio Morosini, *Via della fede* (Rome: Sacra congregatio de propaganda fide, 1683), unpaginated introduction to the Jewish reader and 1415. On Morosini, see Benjamin Ravid, “Contra Judaeos,” and Michela Andreatta, “Raccontare per persuadere: conversione e narrazione in *Via della fede* di Giulio Morosini,” in *Contributi di storia religiosa in onore di Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini*, eds. Maddalena del Bianco Cotrozzi, Riccardo Di Segni and Marcello Massenzio. With the collaboration of Maria Amalia D’Aronco (Florence: Olschki, 2014), 85–118.

29 See Ravid, “Contra Judaeos,” 303–28.

1722) marked an important step in the *rezeptionsgeschichte* of the *Discourse*.<sup>30</sup> In chapter 20 of his relatively short work, Toland not only expressed his admiration of Luzzatto and mentioned his intention to translate the *Discourse* from Italian to English, but also gave the reason why Luzzatto had written the *Discourse*:

I cou'd insist on several other as cogent Topics, as any that have been hitherto alledg'd, in behalf of the Jews but left what I have already asserted about both the benefit and safety of naturalizing them [...] and also to supply those other arguments by me purposely omitted, I shall in convenient time publish the translation of a Treatise out of Italian, written above 60 years ago, by the famous Rabbi, SIMON LUZZATTO.<sup>31</sup>

This piece was offer'd with an intention near a kin to mine, to the most serene Republic of Venice, where some hardships were then propos'd to be put upon the Jews, but by this means diverted. LUZZATTO was a man of extraordinary learning and judgment, very acute, and not meanly eloquent: which shows that the Jews want not always for all men tho he gives excellent reasons himself.<sup>32</sup>

However, Toland never published his translation and the world had to wait for the publication of a complete English translation of the *Discourse* for over 300 years until this volume appeared. Yet the *Discourse* was not completely forgotten. It was mentioned in the works of early modern antiquarians and historians, and passages were translated into Latin and French, and later into Hebrew.<sup>33</sup> As the modern scientific study of Judaism, *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, developed during the nineteenth century and new Hebrew documents were discovered, references to Luzzatto occasionally appeared. The popular multi-volume *Geschichte der Juden* (*The History of the Jews*) of Heinrich Graetz – also available in Hebrew, Russian, English, and partially in French and Yiddish – discussed Luzzatto briefly. On the basis of the information then available, an entry devoted to Luzzatto was included in the Jewish Encyclopedia of 1901–1906 that today should be read with caution. Yet no original scholarship was undertaken on him, but one short article by Angelo Sacerdoti, the Chief Rabbi of Rome (1886–1935), the transcript of a lecture delivered in 1925, appeared in a posthumous collection of Sacerdoti's writings published in 1936.<sup>34</sup>

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**30** John Toland, *Reasons for Naturalizing the Jews in Great Britain and Ireland on the same foot with all other nations. Containing also a defense of the Jews against all vulgar prejudices in all countries* (London: J. Roberts, 1714); see Isaac Barzilay, "John Toland's Borrowings from Simone Luzzatto: Luzzatto's *Discourse* on the Jews of Venice (1638) the Major Source of Toland's Writing on the Naturalization of the Jews in Great Britain and Ireland (1714)," *Jewish Social Studies* 31 (1969): 75–81.

**31** By writing "publish the translation of the *Discorso*," did Toland mean that he already had a translation or rather that he was going to undertake or commission such a translation?

**32** Toland, *Reasons*, 59–60.

**33** Veltri, "Individual Responsibility," 302 n. 92, and with slightly more bibliographical detail, Veltri, "Saggio introduttivo," XLIII.

**34** Angelo Sacerdoti, "Simone Luzzatto," in *In memoria di Angelo Sacerdoti* (Rome: Tummenelli, 1936), 99–113.



The modern study of the *Discourse* commenced in 1936 with the publication of the German book *Galut* by the prominent Jewish historian Yitzhak Baer that devoted an entire chapter to Luzzatto.<sup>35</sup> After *Galut* appeared in English translation in 1947, a far greater audience became aware of Luzzatto. In 1950 a complete Hebrew translation of the *Discourse* by Dante Lattes with a biographical introduction by Moses Shulvass and an extensive essay by Riccardo Bachi was published in the “Historical Library” series edited by Yitzhak Baer and his colleague at the Hebrew University, Ben-Zion Dinur.<sup>36</sup> Finally, in the later years of the twentieth century, with the emergence of a new generation of scholars in the United States, the State of Israel, and Italy, serious study commenced not only of Simone Luzzatto and his *Discourse* but also of his *Socrates* (1651), an enigmatic humanistic philosophical work that had been almost completely overlooked for over three hundred years. An annotated edition of *Socrates* was published in 2013 and will shortly appear in a keenly awaited bi-lingual Italian-English annotated volume thanks to the diligent research of Giuseppe Veltri, Michela Torbidoni, and their associates. It will certainly lead to the integration of Luzzatto into discussions of the early modern intellectual world. The current studies of one of the most illustrious inhabitants of the Venetian ghetto, taking into consideration the completely different natures of the *Discourse* and of the *Socrates*, both of which Luzzatto wrote primarily for a Venetian Christian audience, and then integrating them with an assessment of his Hebrew writings for his learned Jewish associates, are of great significance for understanding Luzzatto and for the light shed on the complexity of thought and the impact of the surrounding world within the porous early modern ghetto of Venice.

## 2 The Incident of 1636–37

Presenting a tradition that was still preserved in his day some fifty years after the death of Luzzatto in 1663, Toland, as noted above, wrote that Luzzatto had offered

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35 For details, see Veltri, “Individual Responsibility,” 304.

36 If I may be permitted to interject a personal note at this point, while a graduate student interested in finding a topic for a Ph.D. dissertation, preferably in Italian Jewish history, I came across the Hebrew translation of the *Discourse*. An introductory footnote by the editors of the Historiographical Series to the essay of Bachi observing that “this book deserves further investigation” (27) determined the future course of my academic life. I was especially interested in the opening chapters that dealt with the economic activities of the Jews in Venice, and fortunately among the few scholarly articles on Venice then available was one by Cecil Roth that drew my attention to a charter of the Jewish merchants of Venice that he had located in the New York Public Library. Soon afterwards, I discovered the *Archivio di Stato* and devoted my Ph.D. dissertation to studying the history of the Jewish merchants of Venice down to the time of the publication of the *Discourse* in 1638 in order to better understand the background of the *Discourse*. By the time that I finished in 1973, I was so involved with the merchants, moneylenders and institution of the ghetto that I never returned to do any further research on Luzzatto.

a work “with an intention near a kin to mine, to the most serene Republic of Venice, when some hardships were then propos’d to be put upon the Jews, but by this means diverted.” Yet the nature of these hardships remained unknown for almost two hundred years more, until finally on the basis of two Hebrew sources published in the twentieth century and further research in the *Archivio di Stato di Venezia*, the specific events that occurred in Venice shortly before the publication of the *Discourse* in 1638 can be reconstructed.

The first and longest account of these events was recorded in the *Ḥayye Yehudah* (*The Life of Judah*), an autobiography written by Leone Modena for the benefit of his descendants. Although a few nineteenth-century authors had quoted brief excerpts from it, this remarkable work remained unpublished in its entirety until 1911.<sup>37</sup> While *The Life of Judah* provides invaluable information about Jewish life in the ghetto of Venice, Modena did not intend to write a history of his contemporary world; rather, everything focused on himself, his aspirations, his achievements, and his tribulations, and he introduced background details to a very limited extent, only in so far as they were relevant to his personal account.<sup>38</sup> To his great consternation, Modena came to feel threatened by an incident that occurred in 1636–37, shortly before the publication of Luzzatto’s *Discourse* in 1638, and he related it in great detail in *The Life of Judah*.<sup>39</sup>

On Purim of 5396 [21 March 1636], the entire community turned from joy to mourning when trouble began for the community as whole, for some individuals in particular, and for myself.

It was because the crime of Grassin Scaramella and Sabbadin Cattelan was discovered. They had received goods and cash – silk, silk clothing and gold – worth seventy thousand ducats, stolen by some Christians in the Merceria from the merchant Bergonzi, and had put them in a room in one of the houses in the ghetto. A worthless scoundrel named Isaac the son of Jacob Senego, may his name be blotted out, had informed against them and disclosed the affair.

Government agents came and arrested Sabbadin, who showed them where the money was, but Grassin escaped. Menahem d’Angelo and Isaac Scaramella were involved with them through the accusation, even though they were innocent. On Purim, the ghetto compound was closed off in order to conduct a house-to-house search for them in great haste. The outcry

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37 First published in its entirety in 1911, the autobiography was edited by Daniel Carpi on the basis of the original manuscript with introduction and notes under the title *Hayye Yehuda: The Autobiography of a Venetian Rabbi* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1985). An English translation by Mark R. Cohen, also on the basis of the original manuscript with introductory essays by Theodore K. Rabb and Mark R. Cohen, Howard E. Adelman, and Natalie Z. Davis, and historical notes by Howard E. Adelman and Benjamin Ravid, appeared under the title *The Autobiography of a Seventeenth-Century Venetian Rabbi: Leon Modena’s Life of Judah* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988). For an Italian translation, see *Vita di Jehudà: Autobiografia di Leon Modena rabbino veneziano del XVII secolo*, translated by Emanuele M. Artom, introduction by Umberto Fortis, notes by Daniel Carpi and edited by Elena Rossi Artom, Umberto Fortis and Ariel Viterbo (Turin: Zamorani, 2000).

38 See Howard Adelman, “Leon Modena: The Autobiography and the Man,” in Cohen, *The Life of Judah*, 19–49.

39 Cohen, *The Life of Judah*, 143–45; see especially the notes by Adelman and Ravid, 249–55.

against and contempt for all Jews on the part of everyone in the city – nobles, citizens and commoners – increased as usual. For when one individual committed a crime, they would grow angry at the entire community, calling us a band of thieves and [saying] that every kind of crime is concealed in the ghetto. Ever since then, they [the Jews] have been the object of scorn and hatred, instead of, as formerly, being loved by all.

Then calamity was added to calamity. On the first day of Passover 5396 [20 April 1636], the Zorzetti brothers, Mordechai who died later as an apostate while in prison and Jacob who is now serving a sentence on a galley, were arrested for giving a bribe to the Quarantia [the chief Venetian Court of Justice] in a case involving two Christians, because the aforementioned Grassin Scaramella informed against them in order to take his revenge. May God refuse to forgive him, for he destroyed and harmed six families of upright men.

[...] The affair lasted about a full year, with constant fear and trembling, which became worse each day. [...] Then, at the beginning of Adar 5397 [began 23 February 1637], my anxiety and fear increased considerably. One of the nobles who had been denounced for accepting a bribe was a dear friend of mine, and I worried that they would say that I had been involved with him in that affair. Even though I was innocent of any transgression, it was nonetheless a time of anger and wrath, with punishments and arrests being made for every light suspicion. So I left for Padua and stayed there for ten days like someone in hiding. I wanted to flee to Ferrara, but God mercifully dissuaded me from becoming a banished person for no fault. I agreed, therefore, to return home a little before Purim.

[...] Afterward, on the seventh of Adar 5397 [3 March 1637], sentence was handed down on all those terrified Jews, and they were ordered to be banished forever, under severe restrictions of banishment. Additionally, and this had never been heard of since the time of our ancestors, they banished from the entire state fathers, sons and brothers of every one of those Jews.

The second account of these events can be found in a Hebrew chronicle from the second half of the seventeenth century published in 1950 under the title of *The Story of the Misfortunes which Afflicted the Jews in Italy*. The eighth episode in *The Story*, named “The Danger of the Expulsion from Venice in the Year 1635–1636,” enhances the account of Modena and sheds further light on the events, especially by providing two very significant additional details.<sup>40</sup> First, it asserted that “the nobles and the Senate and especially the Council of Ten with the Doge Francesco Erizzo at their head, thought of expelling all the Jews from their land.” Second, it describes the significant role of Luzzatto in averting the proposed expulsion:

In the year 5396 [13 September 1635 to 29 September 1636], the holy community of Venice underwent many bad tribulations, and a complete expulsion from all the lands of the government and in particular from Venice and the neighboring cities, was almost enacted against them. The reason for this was that certain base men incited the inhabitants of their city to share in the spoils of a great robbery committed against a certain merchant. At first they banded together, but afterward they had a falling out, and each one decided to inform on his associates in order to clear himself. They secretly revealed to the authorities the circumstances of the robbery and the location of the booty, which was very large. The matter was investigat-

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<sup>40</sup> Moses A. Shulvass, “Sippur ha-šarot she-‘avru be-Italiya” [“A Story of the Misfortunes which Afflicted the Jews in Italy”]. *Hebrew Union College Annual* 22 (1949): 1–21 [in Hebrew], 18–20 (Hebrew pagination).

ed, and that which they had taken was found. Some of those implicated who had taken of the stolen goods fled, while others were caught and placed in jail and this made them very odious indeed in the eyes of the people.

And this was not the end, for matters went from bad to worse, and in order to save themselves from death, they invented accusations to give the government information about some secret matters. Each vied to outdo the other to report about the trial: how the ministers and the judges in whose hands lay the fate of men were bribe-takers who sold a righteous man by means of certain friends of their family and how a man and his brother went to the same woman, the beloved of the judging minister,<sup>41</sup> to pervert justice, to exculpate the guilty and to condemn the innocent. They so slandered them with convincing evidence of these sins, endangering their lives to the extent that they besmirched the honour of the government. Their wickedness became widely known, and to protect their honour the government had to expel from the kingdom some noble families, them, their wives, their children, and their infants to show that they had no sympathy with such activities, and they were angry with the Jews who were the cause of this, revealing things which should not have been made public.

Therefore, some Jewish families, along with their relatives who were not involved in the evil affair, were also expelled. Thus did the ministers do unto them in their anger, to show that there was no favoritism and that the law was the same for all peoples.

Then some heads of families were exiled from the land of their birth; because of the decree of the king [doge] and his counselors, they wandered about, settling where they could, most of them going to Ferrara. [...]

The aforementioned circumstances and their consequences did not change. Therefore the ministers of the Senate and especially the Council of Ten with the Doge Francesco Erizzo at their head, thought of expelling all the Jews from their land. However, God was with them to help and support them and provided them with three faithful shepherds who with their wisdom assuaged the anger of the king and his ministers. One of them was the encyclopedic sage, the great scholar of the Torah, the outstanding physician, Rabbi Samuel Meldola, may God grant him life. The community of Venice requested his own community of Verona to induce him kindly to come and intercede with his Excellency the Doge Erizzo, since Samuel had been his close companion in youth in time of war, so that he could placate him and have him appeal to the ministers concerning the expulsion. The distinguished rabbi apparently did seek the welfare of his people, was successful, and saved them through his intercession.

After him, that great guide, the outstanding rabbinic authority Rabbi Simone Luzzatto, the head of the academy of the holy congregation of Venice, illuminated the path with great wisdom and knowledge. He composed an elegantly written work in the vernacular on the subject of the Jews that he dedicated to the ministers and was well-received by them. They saw and were impressed with his wisdom and fine style and therefore did not reject his plea, and out of pity and graciousness, the nobles had mercy on the people of the Lord, praised be God.

And the third of those who interceded for the community was Rabbi Israel Conegliano, of blessed memory, the most distinguished of the three, the familiar of the minister, Ser Marco Giustiniano, one of the righteous of the nations, who with great exertion interceded with him on behalf of the people of the God of Abraham. And because of these faithful shepherds, those whose hearts God had touched, went to intercede for their people, for it was a time of trouble for the Jews, but they were saved from it, for God moved the government have mercy upon them so that it changed its course and did not speak further of the expulsion, that the edict and the decree was almost, God forbid, decided upon and enacted by the Senate had God not

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41 Presumably Paulina; see Gaetano Cozzi, *Giustizia "contaminata": vicende giudiziarie di nobili ed ebrei nella Venezia del seicento* (Venice: Marsilio, 1996), 99, 100, 106, 108.

been with them and helped them by means of these worthy persons. But before that, many tribulations surrounded them, life hung in the balance before them and they were afraid night and day. Blessed be he who renders good to the guilty, who render good unto them, Amen.

A third account of these events was discovered by late twentieth century investigations in the Archivio di Stato di Venezia. They have shown that the Venetian Council of Ten determinedly occupied itself with the matters related in *The Life of Judah* of Modena and “The Story of the Misfortunes” on numerous occasions between 3 March 1636 and 14 May 1637, and have rendered possible a detailed reconstruction of the course of events.<sup>42</sup> On the night of 1–2 March, 1636 according to the later indictment of the Council of Ten, four Christians had opened the door of the shop of Bartolomeo Bergonzi at the sign of the Madonna in the Merceria with a key that they had forged, and stole gold cloth and silk worth around 60,000 ducats. They took their loot by barge to the ghetto, where it was received by Grassin Scaramella, who was helped by his cousin Isaac Scaramella and Menahem d’Angelo. These Jews hid the goods in the ghetto and at night moved them to different locations so that they would remain undiscovered.

The Council of Ten commenced its investigation of this theft on 3 March 1636. After some preliminary arrests of suspected individuals, on 11 April it ordered the arrest of seven individuals directly involved and eventually on 6 May, all seven were banished forever from the entire Venetian state, all their property was ordered confiscated and applied to reimbursing Bergonzi in full for that portion of his property that had not been recovered. Furthermore, should any of them ever be caught returning to Venice, they were to be hanged between the columns of justice in Piazza San Marco.

On July 11, the Council of Ten turned to the Jewish community of Venice for assistance, as it instructed the *Cattaveri* to order the rabbis and beadles in the ghetto to excommunicate Grassin Scaramella, Menahem d’Angelo and Sabbadin Cattelan because those individuals had not obeyed the order that anyone who knew about the theft at the store of Bergonzi was to inform the authorities. In response three Venetian rabbis, Leone Modena, Graziadio Saravel and Simone Luzzatto came to the *Cattaveri* five days later and respectfully explained that according to their rites and customs, they could not excommunicate anyone unless first they knew the reason, but this was impossible since two of the three were absent and the third was in the prison of the Council of Ten. Thereupon, the *Cattaveri* reiterated their order to excommunicate Grassin Scaramella and Menahem d’Angelo but not Sabbadin Cattelan, since he was already in their hands.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> The following brief summary is reconstructed from the details preserved in *Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Council of Ten, Criminale and Civile*, 3 March 1636 to 14 May 1637, partially incorporated into the notes of Adelman and Ravid in Cohen, *Life of Judah*, 249–55. For a more detailed presentation and analysis, see Cozzi, *Giustizia “contaminata.”*

<sup>43</sup> See “Studi storici,” 441–42.

That, however, was not the end of the story. Sabbadin Cattelan, who had been involved in the theft, had, in return for a promise of immunity, informed on others, and this enabled the Council of Ten to make a breakthrough in a major case of bribery that had been under investigation for around three years. It turned out that some Jews had acted as intermediaries on behalf of a Venetian who wanted to “buy votes” in his lawsuit against another Venetian and had disbursed money to certain judges in the *Quarantia Criminale*. Eventually severe punishment was meted out by the Council of Ten: two Venetian noble judges found guilty of accepting bribes were deprived of their nobility, their names were crossed out of the *Libro d’Oro*, the *Golden Book* in which the names of all legitimate nobles were registered, and they were banished forever from the Venetian state subject to beheading between the columns of justice in Piazza San Marco should they ever be caught returning.<sup>44</sup> Likewise, several Jews involved were also banished for life from Venice and others were sentenced to the galleys for life, while some, including one Samuel Luzzatto, were acquitted.

The severity of this affair in the eyes of the Venetian government was reflected in the decision of the Council of Ten on 14 May 1637. After the sentencing was completed, it ordered that the documents involved in the case be placed in the chest of the Inquisitors of State from which they could not be removed for any reason unless proposed by all six Ducal Counselors and the three Heads of the Council of Ten and passed unanimously by all members of the Council of Ten. Finally, to prevent Jews from committing such abuses in the future, the Council of Ten ruled almost unanimously with only one abstention that without exception no Jew was to go to the courts, to any council, college or magistracy, including those at the Rialto either as a petitioner (*sollecitador*) or as a supporter (*interveniente*) nor under any other pretext be involved in the cases of others, under pain of ten years in chains in the galleys, and if unable to do so, to be hanged.

### 3 The Pre-history of the *Discourse*

Any discussion and analysis of Luzzatto’s *Discourse* must address the issue of the pre-history of the *Discourse* prior to its publication in 1638. While the title page of the work bears the date 1638, a reference inside the text refers to “the past year, 1636,” that would point to a composition date of 1637. The simplest explanation would be that the book was written in 1637 but printed a year later, in 1638. Since the matter of the corruption of justice had been settled in May 1637, Luzzatto could have written the *Discourse*, or at least a part of it, while the danger of expulsion still hovered over the Jews. Some further light has been shed on this matter by a

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<sup>44</sup> Cozzi, *Giustizia “contaminata,”* 119.

recently-published article that revealed that an earlier and much shorter version of some of the material in the *Discourse* had existed in manuscript form prior to the publication of the book in 1638.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, it should be pointed out that the *Discourse* of 1638 underwent more than one impression since different orders of the introductory material and errata list are encountered and certain minor corrections were made.<sup>46</sup>

In any case, one date is certain: on 20 October 1637, following the usual procedure, authorization to publish the *Discourse* was issued by the *Cattaveri* on the basis of the report of the Inquisitor, Fulgenzio Micanzio, and the Reformatori of the University of Padua.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps it was not possible to print the book during the time remaining in 1637, and hence the 1638 date of publication.

The involvement of Fulgenzio Micanzio was significant, since only a very few years previously he had shown himself very sympathetic to the Jewish community of Venice. In 1631, the *Avogador del Comun* Zuanne Morosini discovered that the Jewish community possessed a Hebrew book entitled *Il libro dell'università grande* that contained a statute forbidding Jews from having recourse to the Doge, the *Cattaveri* and the magistracies of the Venetian Republic under penalty of excommunication. He ordered that the statute be translated into Italian and given to Gasparo Lonigo, one of the two *consultori in iure* who had succeeded Paolo Sarpi (1552–1623). Lonigo condemned the statute and accused the Jewish community of creating a separate republic of their own and of usurping for themselves absolute jurisdiction over all the Jews in the Venetian state. Presuming that the *Libro grande* contained further material objectionable to God and man, Lonigo recommended that it be burned. Instead, the Senate decided by the vote of 83–6–9 to have the entire book translated into Italian and then passed on to the theologians (*dottori*), who together with the Senate would decide what further action should be taken. Once completed, the translation was given to the other *consultore in iure*, Fulgenzio Micanzio (1570–1654), for his evaluation. Micanzio had been a younger colleague and close friend and associate of Paolo Sarpi and eventually his biographer. Micanzio did not share Lonigo's negative attitude, but rather concluded that the provisions of the *Libro grande* posed no threat to the sovereignty and jurisdiction of the state since for the most part they were needed in order to enable the Jews to maintain their community so that they could meet their responsibilities in accordance with the wishes of the Venetian government, and that their means of enforcement, excommunication, con-

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<sup>45</sup> Giuseppe Veltri, Gianfranco Miletto, and Guido Bartolucci, "The Last Will and the Testament of Simone Luzzatto (1583?–1663) and the Only Known Manuscript of the *Discorso* (1638). Newly Discovered Manuscripts from the State Archive of Venice and the Marciana Library." *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 5, n. 1 (2011): 125–46.

<sup>46</sup> See Veltri "Individual Responsibility," 282–83, and in greater detail, Veltri, "Saggio introduttivo," XLII–XLIII.

<sup>47</sup> See Veltri, *Filosofo e rabbino*, 337. Perhaps it was not possible to print the book in the time remaining in 1637 and hence the 1638 publication date.

stituted only a spiritual penalty. As a result, the Venetian government did not undertake any action and the *status quo* continued.<sup>48</sup>

Although in the end no total expulsion of the Jews took place but rather only the banishment of a few guilty Jews, the possibility that there had been some serious discussion of expelling the Jews from Venice cannot be precluded, and indeed in view of the specific details related in the “Story” that “the ministers of the Senate and especially the Council of Ten with the Doge Francesco Erizzo at their head, thought of expelling all the Jews from their land,” seems quite possible. However, since the Venetians prided themselves on governing in accordance to the law, it is worthwhile considering the laws regarding the residence of the Jews in Venice. The legal basis for their residence was contained in two sets of charters issued by the Senate to two groups of Jews who engaged in two different types of economic activities. The first and longest residing group was the moneylenders, who had been chartered since 1513 while the second, the merchants, had received their first charter in 1589. The five-year charter of the moneylenders in effect in 1636–37 had been renewed on 29 December 1634, and contained no provision for expulsion but only a sixteen-month grace period in case of non-renewal of their charter. On the other hand, the renewal of the charter of the Jewish merchants followed the regular procedure established for all charter renewals. First, the Jews had to submit a petition seeking the renewal of the charter to the Ducal Counselors, who if they approved it, passed it on the *Collegio*. Then the *Collegio* would request written reports from four of the Venetian magistracies involved with the Jews, and on that basis make any changes that thought desirable before passing the legislation on to the Senate for approval or rejection. The Jews petitioned for renewal on or before 4 June 1635 and the charter was approved in the Senate on 10 July 1636. Thus, the renewal of the charter of the Jewish merchants was under consideration during the time of the “incident” of 1636–37. Although the last of the magistracies submitted their favorable reports on 29 January 1636 before the theft at the store of Bergonzi on 1–2 March 1636, nevertheless the possibility that the approval of the charter was delayed from 19 January until 10 July 1636 because of the “incident” cannot be completely precluded. However, since the reports of the magistracies were favorable and clearly the Jews were fulfilling the role in Venetian maritime commerce that the government expected of them, the Senate renewed their charter by the overwhelming vote of 82 in favor, 4 opposed, and 8 abstentions.

Indeed, Gaetano Cozzi asserted that the real problem of the Jews was not that of an expulsion. Rather it was the danger that the welcoming climate that had at-

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<sup>48</sup> See Benjamin Ravid, “‘A Republic Separate From All Other Government’: Jewish Autonomy in Venice in the Seventeenth Century and the Translation of the *Libro Grande*” (Hebrew), in *Thought and Action: Essays in Memory of Simon Rawidowicz on the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of His Death*, eds. Alfred A. Greenbaum and Alfred L. Ivry (Tel Aviv/Haifa: Tcherikover Ltd. and Haifa University Press, 1983), 53–76; Malkiel, *A Separate Republic*, 31–60; and for the text of Micanzio’s memorandum, 239–55, and Veltri, *Filosofo e rabbino*, 337.



tracted Jews to the city and enabled them to integrate to the extent that they could bribe the highest ministers of state was compromised, and that led to the publication of the *Discourse*.<sup>49</sup> Luzzatto had circulated a text in 1636–37 to avert an expulsion being considered in Venice and then had published the *Discourse* in 1638 in order to try to restore the previous relationship. While the details of Cozzi's presentation require further attention, it serves as a reminder of the importance of the events in Venice in shaping the printed version of the *Discourse*, as well as the republication of Modena's *Riti*, and might explain why the *Discourse* was published in 1638 even though the danger of an expulsion had passed.

## 4 The Incident of 1636–37 as Reflected in the *Discourse*

Reading the *Discourse* in the light of the accounts in *The Life of Judah*, “The Story of the Misfortunes,” and the archival documents, it appears that three passages in it allude to the actual danger facing the entire Jewish community of Venice in 1636–37 and constitute an attempt to reduce hostility toward the Jews residing in Venice.

The first such passage is found in the “Preface to the Entire Work” of the *Discourse*.<sup>50</sup> In it, Luzzatto stated that he wished to establish that the Jews were not a useless part of the population of the city but rather brought it benefit, and therefore had been allowed by the government to live in it. This realisation, he hoped, would lead those hostile towards the Jews to become less contumacious towards them. Even if, he continued, in conformity with the weakness of human nature, some rascals and criminals were found among the Jewish people, that should not obscure nor detract from the good will that the Jews as a whole felt toward their most clement rulers, and the Jews should not fear that as a result the public indignation would be provoked against them. Then, in a clear attempt to justify not expelling the whole community because of the crimes of a few individuals, Luzzatto posited the following analogy: the wise farmer, when confronted with useless and harmful grasses growing on well-cultivated land along with the desired harvest, does not abandon his project, but rather extirpates the bad plants and continues his wearisome labor of caring for the good and preserving the useful. Luzzatto further asserted that all who possessed sufficient experience in human affairs knew that evil was much more noticeable than good for it constituted a deviation from the known and accustomed order, while the good was a continuation of the existing and therefore scarcely observed even by the wisest. As examples, he pointed out that good health was only realised when compared with its opposite, and similarly those who travel with

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<sup>49</sup> See Cozzi, *Giustizia* “Contaminata,” 122–23.

<sup>50</sup> *Discourse*, 5v–6v.

the stream and move swiftly did not perceive their swift motion until they encounter even a little obstacle. After citing these examples, Luzzatto succinctly concluded his argument by applying them to the situation of the Jews: some people exaggerate the crimes of a few Jews as intolerable evils and unbearable calamities, while ignoring the ordinary advantages and profits that are derived from them.

The second passage in the *Discourse* that reflects the events of 1636–37 is found in the eleventh consideration.<sup>51</sup> After pointing out the difficulties inherent in characterizing an entire people, Luzzatto nevertheless attempted to characterise the Jewish people, enumerating both their weaknesses and strengths. Among their strong points, he included the fact that almost always their faults and delinquencies partook more of the base and the abject than of the heinous and grave. Therefore, he argued, should one of the Jews commit a crime, as often happened among any people, and disobey the laws of the ruler, the remedy was easy and could be handled by the ordinary magistrates with the usual penalties of exile, prison, galleys, mutilation of limbs, and death, since the crimes had as their aim only the personal benefit of their perpetrators who were driven by the greed for goods or similar baseness and did not constitute a major threat to the established political and religious order. After a lengthy digression designed to explain apparent instances of collective punishment in biblical times and in the days of the Roman Empire, Luzzatto asserted the general principle that condemning an entire group because of the crimes of an individual was against both natural and divine law. Nothing in the world, he claimed, was so perfect that it could not be misused. Iron, needed for so many instruments necessary for human life, was also a means of killing, while speech, which ennobled mankind, was also often a cause of misfortune and ruin, yet no legislator ever sought to prohibit the mining of iron or to forbid human speech. Even in the case of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, who had exceeded all boundaries of wickedness, God was willing to avert the punishment deserved by such a great number of people if ten innocent men could be found.<sup>52</sup> Thus, using biblical precedent as a guide for contemporary policy, Luzzatto concluded that it was inappropriate that a few offenders in a people should suffice to provoke the public indignation against all of them.

Finally, in the twelfth consideration of the *Discourse*, Luzzatto returned to contemporary events.<sup>53</sup> There was no doubt, he wrote, that the Jews were more subject to slander than any other people because of the impunity enjoyed by their slanderers. And since often the truth was mixed with the false, the invective made against them became all the more pernicious and much care was needed to distinguish between the true and the false. Those who accused the Jews of very serious crimes

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 35v–40r

<sup>52</sup> The copy of the *Discourse* used for the photo-reproduction (Bologna, 1976) read “innocenza di cinque huomini” (40r). That copy did not have an errata list as did some others.

<sup>53</sup> Luzzatto, *Discourse*, 43v–45v.

not only injured the Jews but also criticised the careful prudence of their ruler, for they claimed to know more than the ruler who never ceased to inquire into and investigate the most hidden deeds of his subjects. And, Luzzatto then asked rhetorically if it could be maintained that those people whose business was not to be acquainted with the crimes of the Jews would be better informed than the authorities whose duty it was to be concerned with these matters? This was especially so since because of the closeness of the Jewish quarter it was impossible that their wicked actions would not be observed and discovered by their neighbors and be easily revealed to the authorities, whether out of desire to obtain a reward or out of feelings of hatred and rivalry that, like other peoples, Jews also harbored. Therefore, those who slandered the Jews should restrain their curiosity, allow the reliable prudence of the authorities to investigate matters, and then consider anything not punished by them to doubtlessly constitute a vain lie or a hasty conclusion. Luzzatto did not go into specific details regarding the charges against the Jews of Venice, other than pointing out the absurdity of the accusation that the Jews were advising the Barbary pirates of the departure of Venetian ships from the city and then sharing in the booty. Luzzatto concluded that the prudent reader should realise the weakness of the many other accusations against the Jews of Venice and that only those who were guilty should be punished.<sup>54</sup>

## 5 The Economic Dimension of the *Discourse*: International Maritime Commerce and Financial Contributions

Since Luzzatto was very well-informed regarding what was transpiring both inside the ghetto and outside of it, was highly respected in both the Jewish and the non-Jewish world, was involved in the crisis facing the Jews of Venice, and was capable of writing in the Italian idiom of his day, he was well-suited to serve as defense attorney of the Jews. Consequently, his discussion of the two main reasons for which Jews had been permitted to reside in Venice, first, to import and export merchandise to Venice and enhance the customs duties by means of their international maritime trade and second, to operate carefully controlled loan banks providing credit to the less well-off inhabitants of the city, bears further analysis.

In a sense, the first seven considerations of the *Discourse* constitute the conceptual and historical background leading up to the eighth consideration in which Luz-

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<sup>54</sup> For the invocation of this argument in connection with the expulsion of the Jews from Venice in 1571, see Benjamin Arbel, *Trading Nations: Jews and Venetians in the Early Modern Eastern Mediterranean* (Leiden/New York/Köln: Brill, 1995), 78–94.

zatto transitioned to a quantitative financial assessment of the benefits that the Jews brought to the Venetian treasury and populace. Luzzatto commenced by affirming the great importance, indeed necessity, of international commerce for maintaining society. He then pointed out that in the past, the Venetians had been pre-eminent in that activity. However, the mercantile profession was always strenuous and quite dangerous, since many times merchants had to risk their lives and possessions when undergoing lengthy voyages, difficult sea crossings, and uncertain commitments. Therefore, Luzzatto continued, after amassing adequate riches, they made every effort to take full advantage of their acquisitions in peace and tranquility by investing them in real estate and urban sources of income. Accordingly, after Venice expanded on the Italian mainland, the merchants aspired to free themselves from the troubles and dangers that arose from long-distance trade and travelling. No longer wishing to expose themselves to the vagaries of fortune, Luzzatto asserted, they turned instead to the acquisition of property, the cultivation of land, and other occupations of civil life.<sup>55</sup> Luzzatto continued by claiming that since Venice had never been invaded or defeated in battle,<sup>56</sup> of necessity the Venetians must have withdrawn from trade voluntarily after the Venetian expansion on the Italian mainland, attracted by the less dangerous and wearisome alternative of investing in real estate and urban sources of income. Although by stressing the voluntary nature of the withdrawal of the Venetian merchants from trade in order to counter the argument that the Jews had usurped that trade from the Venetians, Luzzatto greatly oversimplified the very complex issue of cause and effect of the withdrawal of the Venetians from maritime trade, nevertheless, his argument was essentially valid, for whether the withdrawal of Venetian merchants had been voluntary or involuntary, by 1638 they were no longer the factor that they had been in the past in that sector.

Interestingly, Luzzatto did not identify two of the main reasons for the decline in Venetian commerce with the Levant. The first was the increasing competition, as the sixteenth century progressed, of French and English merchants, followed at the end of the century by the Dutch, in the Levant. Second, these northern European merchants were often able to offer cheaper goods in the Ottoman markets, albeit sometimes of inferior quality as in the case of certain cloth, than could the Venetians. These issues had been mentioned in government documents before the writing of the *Discourse* and in no way do they weaken Luzzatto's arguments in favor

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55 The tendency of Venetian merchants to withdraw from maritime commerce, and especially from the Levant trade, which had been the source of the wealth and greatness of Venice, was a development noted with great concern by Venetian contemporaries from the early sixteenth century on, and has been the subject of much discussion among modern scholars. However, certainly not all Venetian merchants withdrew from maritime commerce.

56 While the city of Venice in the lagoons had never been invaded, the Venetians had certainly lost many battles on both land and sea and in any case, it is not clear how a military defeat or even invasion would necessarily have led the Venetians to withdraw from trade.

of the Jews, but by omitting them he could emphasise the voluntary nature of the Venetian withdrawal from trade.

Furthermore, Luzzatto claimed that the shift on the part of Venetian merchants from international maritime trade to domestic construction and the purchase of land was not beneficial for Venice, for the government gained more from maritime commerce than from real estate.<sup>57</sup> Luzzatto then proceeded to raise and dismiss arguments that could be advanced against his position, and concluded with the additional observation that maritime trade maintained both vessels and the skills of navigators and sailors, an issue of distinction and valour in times of peace and so necessary in times of war.

Luzzatto returned to his main theme as he claimed that since Venetian merchants had withdrawn from international commerce, foreigners had assumed their place in trade. Eventually these foreigners, after becoming wealthy also retired and returned to their homeland, taking with them the profits that they had made in Venice, thereby diminishing the wealth of the city. They in turn were replaced by other foreigners and the cycle repeated itself, draining money from Venice, which as a result did not become enriched from its commerce. Therefore, he concluded, it should not be asked whether it was better that the international maritime commerce of Venice be handled by Venetians or by Jews, but rather whether it was better to have it handled by foreigners or by Jews. Posing the question in this manner, he believed that it was obviously better to have it handled by the Jews.<sup>58</sup> Jews, he claimed, were loyal to governments that accepted them and granted them privileges. This was especially the case in Venice because the Jews had no homeland to which they could return, taking the profits they had made in Venice with them. Since Jews were not allowed to invest their money in real estate and had no occupation other than trade in Venice, they had to keep their assets liquid and employ them in commerce.

In the eighth consideration, Luzzatto embarked upon what was perhaps the most important part of the *Discourse* since it was designed to appeal to the practical side of the Venetian nobility who monopolised the judicial, administrative, and above all, the decision-making legislative councils of the Venetian republic and

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<sup>57</sup> See *Discourse*, 23r–24r. This argument requires careful analysis.

<sup>58</sup> This was basically the policy adopted by the Venetian government and led to the first charter of the Levantine and Pontentine Jews in Venice in 1589 which contained two unique provisions that those merchants were to enjoy until the end of the Venetian republic; for details, see Benjamin Ravid, “An Introduction to the Charters of the Jewish Merchants of Venice,” in *The Mediterranean and the Jews II: Society, Culture and Economy in Early Modern Times*, eds. Elliot Horowitz and Moses Orfali (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press: 2002), 207–11, and in greater detail, Benjamin Ravid, “Venice, Rome, and the Reversion of Conversos to Judaism: A Study in *Ragione di Stato*,” in *L'identità dissimulata: giudaizzanti iberici nell'europa cristiana dell'età moderna*, ed. Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini (Florence: Olschki, 2000), 151–93, both photo-reproduced in Ravid, *Studies on the Jews of Venice*.

were always desirous to increase revenue from all possible sources.<sup>59</sup> He commenced by asserting that he would adopt an approach that would provide a truthful result rather than one with errors and fallacies. However, a close reading of his presentation shows that he weakened the certitude of his calculations by the frequent use of the word *often* and other such qualifying terms, which will be italicised in the following discussion.

However, since errors and fallacies often (*per l'ordinario*) result from general examinations, while the truth always accompanies and follows [the focus on] details and differences, it seems to me appropriate here to turn to the individual case and to approach the calculation of the profits one can probably estimate (*probabilmente si può stimare*) that the government ordinarily receives annually from the [Jewish] Nation living sheltered in the city, leaving aside those dwelling in the other parts of the state.

Luzzatto's following statement that "I estimate (*stimo*) that there are around six thousand Jews [in Venice]" is problematic. Although as a leader involved in community affairs including tax assessment and collection, he should have known how many Jews resided in Venice, nevertheless his figure appears excessively high and should be reduced by at least a quarter or more, probably even halved.<sup>60</sup> Since he utilised the figure of 6,000 Jewish inhabitants as the basis for his following calculations, the results of those calculations should also be reduced.

Luzzatto's subsequent statement that one can judge (*giudicare*) that the tax raised from their purchases of bread, wine, oil, meat, clothing, and other similar items amounted to forty-eight thousand ducats, calculated on the basis of an annual eight ducats per head, also presents a problem. These taxes on the items mentioned by Luzzatto were not direct taxes of a stipulated amount levied on the Jewish community collectively but rather general indirect taxes included in the sales price of commodities purchased for consumption by individuals over the year. While the Venetian government kept track of total tax payments, it could not calculate how much of that revenue came from purchases by individual Jews in stores throughout the city, and any estimate of that amount as eight ducats per head must be very tentative.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, multiplying the uncertain sum of eight ducats annually per head by the presumed 6,000 individuals will lead to further distortions in his calculations.

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<sup>59</sup> *Discourse*, 28r–32r.

<sup>60</sup> The text of a speech delivered in the Venetian Senate in 1659 or shortly afterward stated that there were 4,000 in Venice and referred to a document of 1649 that gave a figure of 2,629; see Veltri and Miletto, "Difesa inedita," 265. This last figure is probably closest to the actual population. For population figures on the Jews of Venice, see Giovanni Favero and Francesca Trivellato, "Gli abitanti del ghetto di Venezia in età moderna: dati e ipotesi," *Zakhor* 7 (2004): 9–50.

<sup>61</sup> It is instructive to compare Luzzatto's treatment here with the more detailed presentation of the text of the speech of Loredan in defence of the Jews delivered in 1659 or shortly afterward; see the notes to the English translation, above.

Possibly, in order to deflect any criticism of his specific calculations, Luzzatto immediately proposed and rejected a more general and different potential criticism. He asserted that his calculation could not be refuted by arguing that if the Jews did not live in Venice, the same number of Christian inhabitants would arrive and would be more profitable than were the Jews, as happened during the year after the last plague, when, after a very short time, the city was filled again. That argument, he maintained, was not valid, since the Jews were forbidden to engage in all the crafts and prohibited to possess real estate or to serve as lawyers in the courts. Thus, they did not occupy the place of anyone, and if they should leave, no one else would come to the city to live under such restrictions.

Next, Luzzatto claimed that a great number of Venetian Christians maintained themselves by selling food to the Jews. Similarly, Christian artisans were employed by Jews not only for their personal services, but also to produce the goods that the Jews distributed in various parts of the world. Since he did not know the exact number of these artisans, he wanted to suppose (*voglio suporre*) that there were around four thousand of them. Once again, Luzzatto presented a questionable figure that cannot be verified. Since Jews constituted around two percent of the population, presumably very few Christians, if any, could have earned their entire living from Jews. Actually, the Jews increased the earnings of some individual Venetians who supplied their needs rather than generating additional full-time employment, and accordingly Luzzatto might have overestimated the Jewish contribution to the Venetian treasury. Moreover, he continued very questionably, if no Jews remained in the city, then some of these artisans would make so little profit that they would be reduced to very harsh circumstances and consequently the government would not receive its usual revenue.

On the basis of his previous unreliable estimates of eight ducats per head and a population of 6,000 Jews in the ghetto, Luzzatto calculated that the government would receive thirty-two thousand ducats. Moreover, he judged (*giudico*) that the import and export duties that Jews paid amounted to approximately (*in circa*) seventy thousand ducats per year.<sup>62</sup> If they did not reside in Venice, that sum would to a great extent be lost, for they traded with their own capital and also that of their close relatives who always preferred to entrust their money and business to Jews. Furthermore, Luzzatto drew attention to the additional duty payments resulting indirectly from the trade of the Jews that ended up in the hands of the government. When a Jew exported woolen clothes, soap, silk clothing and other merchandise he would pay his export duties, and these exports generated import payments on the materials required to prepare the exports, such as the wool, the oil used in making

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<sup>62</sup> Some round number regarding the import and export duties paid by Jews are preserved in documents written to support the renewal of the charter of the Jewish merchants and this issue deserves further archival investigation; in the interim see Ravid, "The Third Charter of the Jewish Merchants of Venice," 83–134 and Ravid, "An Introduction to the Charters of the Jewish Merchants of Venice," 203–46.

cloth, and likewise the woad, indigo, cochineal, and kermes used for dyeing. Based on the export duties that the Jews paid, one could estimate (*si può giudicare*) the import duties that they paid. This estimation, Luzzatto asserted, amounted to approximately two thirds of the former (70,000), that is, to another forty-seven thousand ducats.

Luzzatto then added the taxes that the Jews paid for the provisioning of the loan banks to meet the needs of the poor<sup>63</sup> and all their related expenses that he claimed amounted to around 8,000 ducats annually.<sup>64</sup> However, it should be noted that this tax was an internal tax collected by the Jewish community to enable it to raise the funds to fulfil the requirement imposed upon it by the Venetian government to operate the loan banks for the urban poor and did not benefit the Venetian treasury.

Following that, Luzzatto addressed another responsibility of the Jews. He asserted that the obligation placed upon them to furnish lodgings for visiting princes and ambassadors (from their *strazzaria* stores) was equally considerable, for when the government itself paid for such a visit, it had to spend up to 800 ducats per month. This obligation, he claimed, was one of the most troublesome burdens imposed upon the Jews because of the frequent changes of the palaces used for accommodations.<sup>65</sup> Luzzatto then stated that one could add more payments, such as the tax on the consumption of salt, which he believed (*credo esser*) was quadruple the amount used by Christians because of the Jewish rite of salting meat to extract blood, which they were not allowed to consume. However, he related that he would not develop this matter further and concluded that the sum of the aforementioned annual revenue amounted to 205,000 ducats. Then, he followed with a surprising disclaimer:

I do not dare to assert that the calculation is above criticism and absolutely trustworthy, or that it does not require revision. Political matters are full of alterations and contingencies, and in this *Discourse*, I intended that I would follow the probable and the plausible, just as a new academician would, and not as a mathematician who follows the absolutely demonstrable and undeniable.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> The Italian name for these establishments was *banco* (plural: *banchi*) *di pegni* (literally bench or board of pawns, *banco-banchi* referring to the benches on which the transactions took place, shortened to *banco-banchi*). Therefore, understandably their owners and managers were often referred to, somewhat misleadingly, as *banchieri* (bankers) rather than *prestatori* or *feneratori* (moneylenders), or more specifically, pawnbrokers. Likewise the designations *banchi di scritti* or *banchi di giro* were shortened to *banchi*, or in the singular, *banco*, and their operators also known as *banchieri*, or bankers, obviously in no way similar to their modern namesakes who engage in far more complex operations.

<sup>64</sup> According to a report of the magistracy of the *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia*, who had jurisdiction over commercial matters, issued on 29 January 1636, the expenses of the loan banks amounted to 7,124 ducats; see Ravid, "Introduction to the Charters," 225.

<sup>65</sup> See Ravid, "Introduction to the Charters," 225 n. 53. I will explain this matter further in my forthcoming book on the Jews of Venice.

<sup>66</sup> *Discourse*, 30r.



Although it would appear that Luzzatto had finished his calculations, nevertheless he continued. The extraordinary tax of the past year 1636, although levied on all the inhabitants of the city and generating eleven thousand ducats which seemed moderate, when applied to the Jews it was extremely burdensome compared to what other inhabitants of the city had to pay. Another tax, he related, was that levied on a quarter of the amount of the rent payments, which was burdensome for the Jews because the houses were assessed according to the closeness of dwellings confined within the narrow enclosure of the ghetto. Indeed, he claimed that without any overestimation one could judge (*si può giudicare*) that this assessment would have amounted to triple of what it would have been had the houses been outside the ghetto inhabited by Christians, and for the Jews it amounted to six thousand ducats. Adding these two taxes to the previous sum produced the sum of 220,000 ducats that, Luzzatto concluded, represented a considerable amount of money, for there were provinces, usually considered as duchies, that never generate such a high revenue.<sup>67</sup>

Luzzatto then added two further items. When the Venetian fleet went to battle, the Jews contributed with the artisans and on past occasions, they had paid 1,500 ducats.<sup>68</sup> Also, those artisans and professionals who remained in the city because of the Jews contributed to the naval campaign either in person or by hiring men to serve in the fleet and this, Luzzatto pointed out, was also profit that resulted from the presence of the Jews.

Additionally, Luzzatto related, one had to take into account the considerable sum of money of the Jews that circulated in the public bank and was available for the service of many, especially for commerce. Moreover, when it was ordered to deposit money in the Mint at the usual interest rate, the Jews were taxed as all others. This, he added, deserved further consideration, since, as he had already said, the Jews had been entrusted with possessions and wealth belonging to their friends and relatives who were subjects of other rulers. Therefore, when depositing money in the Mint, they could trade with a considerable sum of ordinary interest from the money that others had entrusted to them. This would generate greater profits than conducting similar transactions with other foreigners who would send the annual interest to their own countries and thereby deprive the city of it. With the Jews, a different scenario might unfold, for since they did not have their own homeland, they would stay where their money was and derive profit from it.

Having presented the income side of the ledger, Luzzatto turned to the other side. Above everything else, he noted, it was worth observing that in order to assure that income from the Jews, the Venetian government did not need to have any con-

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<sup>67</sup> For a discussion of this claim, see Ravid, *Economics and Toleration*, 85–88.

<sup>68</sup> In 1607 the Jews claimed that they had paid 1,250 ducats in galley-tax; see Malkiel, *A Separate Republic*, 129, 257; also 158–59, 546–48, 562–63, 565–66, 614. For further details, see Ravid, “Introduction to the Charters,” 227 n. 64.

cerns or incur any expenses. In an implicit contrast to Venetian possessions on the mainland and overseas, he pointed out that the enclosure of the ghetto did not need a garrison to guard it, nor a citadel to defend it, nor a naval force to patrol the coast to prevent sudden attacks by corsairs. No foreign rulers wanted to attack it, nor need one fear any internal revolt. There was no danger of flooding by the sea or by an overflowing river. The Jews were submissive, humble, and pliable to the will of the ruler, and wished that they could be as skillful at handling weapons and the spilling of their own blood copiously as they were ready to spend money in the service of Venice.

## 6 The Economic Dimension of the *Discourse*: Moneylending

After having dealt extensively with the role of the Jews in international commerce and their direct and indirect contributions to the Venetian treasury, in the ninth consideration Luzzatto turned his attention to Jewish moneylending in Venice.<sup>69</sup> His presentation was generally descriptive rather than theoretical. Supporting his presentation with quotations from both classical and biblical sources, he first pointed out the necessity for governments to provide for the needs of the poor in order to assure domestic tranquility. Then, moving on to the specific case of Venice, he related that the republic required the Jews to operate three loan banks lending money at the low interest rate of only five percent per annum. This rate, Luzzatto correctly observed, was so low that the expenses exceeded the income. Moreover, the amount that had to be available for borrowers, he continued, was without limitation, although the moneylenders were not obliged to lend more than three ducats per pledge. This low interest rate, he added, was unique to Venice, for elsewhere the Jews lent at rates up to eighteen percent.

Luzzatto then enumerated four specific reasons that moved the Venetian Senate to impose such a task on the Jews. First, the Senate, perceiving the discord and repugnance caused by religious differences and the consequences the Jews might suffer from the common people because they were its weakest part, decided that if the Jews were to supply them with money at such a low interest rate in case of need, a certain friendship, or at least tolerance, would be generated toward the Jews, and, he claimed, as experience showed, in Venice the common people were more peaceful and amenable toward the Jews than in other parts of the world. Second, since

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<sup>69</sup> *Discourse*, 32r–34r. For a somewhat more detailed discussion of Luzzatto's views on moneylending, see Benjamin Ravid, "Moneylending in Seventeenth Century Jewish Vernacular Apologetica," in *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, eds. Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 257–75, photo-reproduced in *Studies on the Jews of Venice*.

the Jews were the weakest and least respected subjects of the ruler, the poor might not hesitate to complain about every slight infraction in moneylending and the Jews would receive their due punishment from the magistrates. Third, since usury was so abhorred and detested in Venice, the government did not allow Christians to lend money even at the low rate of five percent. Fourth, although the Venetian republic was so well-established that there was no reason to suppose that it would undergo any change, for the sake of good government and to give an example its government wanted the function of lending money to the poor to be exercised by a subject and submissive group completely without any seditious thoughts, and therefore it selected the Jews. As precedent for such a policy, Luzzatto cited the conduct of the biblical Pharaoh of Egypt who, after having dreamed that a very bad famine would occur in his country, placed a young ex-slave from an alien people and of a different religion, without any popular support, in charge of the distribution of food for the people.

Upon closer examination, Luzzatto's presentation reveals a mosaic of valid description, sound explanation, and apologetic distortion. It is correct that the Venetian government required the Jews to operate three banks to lend money to the Christian poor at the rate of five percent per annum. This rate had been in effect since 1573, and the Jews frequently complained that their expenses exceeded their profits. Also, it appears that the amount to be loaned out was without limit; the charter of the Jews only specified that they had to capitalise their loan banks with a certain amount and that the bankers were not obliged to furnish more than three ducats per pledge. Moreover, the five percent rate was indeed lower than elsewhere, and in their petitions for the renewal of their charter in which they requested a half percent increase to five and a half percent (a twenty percent increase), the Jews had pointed out that on the Venetian mainland, they could lend at rates up to twelve percent; moreover, in Rome, for example, the permitted rate at that time was eighteen percent.

However, when Luzzatto proceeded to explain why the Senate imposed the task of moneylending upon the Jews, he entered into the realm of *apologetica*. His first reason, that the Senate gave the Jews the task of moneylending in order to generate friendship or at least tolerance toward the Jews, reversed the historical course of events. It was not that the Jews of Venice already resided in the city, and the Senate, in order to promote better group relations, decided to give them the task of moneylending; rather, Jews were allowed into the city specifically to fulfill the task of moneylending and owed their residence to the fulfillment of that function. Also, if Luzzatto's claim that the common people were more peaceful and amenable toward the Jews than elsewhere is correct that certainly was not a result of their moneylending activities. If anything, their moneylending activities, while recognised as necessary if not essential, would have aroused resentment rather than gratitude on the part of the borrowers. Rather, the peacefulness was due to the physical layout of Venice and the policy of the Venetian government to maintain law and order as well

as its desire to enable the Jews to live securely in order to fulfill the tasks for which they were allowed to reside in the city.

Luzzatto's second reason, that the Jews as the weakest subjects would receive their due punishment for any infraction, was basically valid. The changes in the terms of their successive charters reveal that while the Venetian government upheld the right of the Jews to practice their religion freely and provided for their fair treatment within the framework of the existing restrictive laws, nevertheless it strove to prevent and punish any abuses that might arise. However, the Venetian government did not single out the Jews for punishment because they were the weakest subjects (a questionable assertion), but rather because they wanted to protect the interests of the Venetian poor and to maintain law and order.

Luzzatto's third reason, that the Jews were tolerated so that Christians would not lend money at interest to fellow Christians against the divine law, was indeed the reason for permitting the residence of the Jews in Venice, as well as in other places on the Italian peninsula and therefore could have received greater stress and attention. Over a hundred years previously, the Venetian diarist Marino Sanuto had pointed out that as long as the Venetian government did not wish to establish a *Monti di Pietà* in Venice such as those existing in many other places on the Italian peninsula and even on the Venetian mainland, the presence of Jewish moneylenders was necessary.<sup>70</sup> Senate legislation of 1553 explicitly asserted that "this Council has permitted the Jews to dwell in our dominions for the sole purpose of preventing Christians from lending upon usury in violation of both the divine and the civil laws"<sup>71</sup> and this view was often repeated.

Luzzatto's fourth reason deserves closer attention. A potential threat to the Jewish community in Venice arose in March 1523 when the Senate approved the idea of establishing a *Monte di Pietà* with the details to be worked out later. Slightly over a year later, in April 1524, the thirteen procurators of the *Ospitali degli Incurabili*, eleven of whom were nobles, presented to the *Collegio* a detailed proposal to establish a *Monte di Pietà*. However, the Council of Ten suddenly intervened and "for the most important and well-considered reasons expressed" ordered those who had submitted the statutes of the *Monte* not to further propose nor speak of the matter and never to reveal that they had been so ordered by the Council of Ten under penalty of death. Furthermore, in the future no one was to propose nor speak about establishing a *Monte di Pietà* unless given permission by the Council and no measures were to be passed unless unanimously approved in the Council. Although one cannot ascertain what the "most important causes and well-considered reasons" were, it has been suggested that this action might have been taken because the government was apprehensive about creating a potentially powerful institution not under its direct control.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Marino Sanuto, *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto* (Venice: F. Visentini, 1879–1903), vol. XXIII, col. 63.

<sup>71</sup> See Pullan, *Rich and Poor*, 521.

<sup>72</sup> See *Ibid.*, 499–504.

Four other references to moneylending are contained in the second half of the *Discourse*, in which Luzzatto was concerned primarily with explaining the nature of Judaism and refuting general arguments raised against the Jews, including those involving moneylending. Two of them merit special attention.<sup>73</sup>

In the twelfth consideration, Luzzatto asserted that the Jews were attacked by three groups of people: religious zealots, politicians and statesmen (*politici e statisti*), and the common people, and he detailed the charge of each group.<sup>74</sup> The politicians and statesmen complained about the charging of usury (Luzzatto used the word in the sense of any interest, not only excessive interest), a crime not only condemned by divine law but also universally prohibited by civil law as a destroyer of wealth and the family. Luzzatto responded by claiming that the usury practised by the Jews was only tolerated by their laws, rather than expressly allowed. Moreover, he continued, it could be affirmed with great probability that Jews who maintained themselves by engaging in usury were very rare, for since their household expenses were very great, it was inconceivable that they could sustain themselves by an activity neither authorised nor permitted by the law of the ruler. Actually, of course, the reason that very few individual Jews supported themselves by usury was not because their household expenses were so great but rather because any moneylending outside of the loan banks was forbidden by Venetian law and severely punished. Furthermore, Luzzatto's statement that Jewish moneylending was not authorised or permitted by the law of the ruler was at variance not only with the actual situation in Venice, where the Jews had been allowed to engage in moneylending for over a hundred years and on the mainland possessions for over two hundred and fifty years at higher rates of up to twelve percent, but also appears to contradict his presentation in the ninth consideration, where he discussed at length the reasons that induced the Venetian government to employ the Jews in the role of moneylenders.

Luzzatto continued by pointing out the disadvantages under which the Jewish moneylenders operated. They could not at any time compel Christian borrowers to redeem their pledges and thus once Jews had invested their capital, they could not get it back but had to wait for the Christian borrowers to redeem their pledge. If *Monti di Pietà*, such as those of Padua, Vicenza,<sup>75</sup> and Verona, in which hundreds of thousands of ducats were invested for the sake of the needy, were not allowed to sell their unredeemed pledges after one year, in a short time they would be out of money with all their capital tied up. Therefore, it was inconceivable that the Jews

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<sup>73</sup> For a more complete discussion, see Ravid, "Moneylending," 258–77. The other two passages are to be found in Luzzatto, *Discourse*, consideration XIII, 47r and consideration XIV, 55v–56r.

<sup>74</sup> *Discourse*, 40v–42v.

<sup>75</sup> Incorrectly rendered in the Hebrew translation as Venice (cf. 42r with page 109), probably a slip of the pen or a typographical error. No *Monte di Pietà* was ever established in Venice since *de facto* the Jews were in effect running one, especially after 1573.

of Venice, who possessed much less wealth, could maintain themselves in so disadvantageous an undertaking. And especially since Jews could legally engage in trade, it was unlikely that they would expose their possessions to the restrictions involved in moneylending. In actuality, he concluded, Jewish moneylending was an activity of orphans and widows rather than of traders.

In this presentation, Luzzatto was basically correct. By his time, the income of the Jewish community of Venice was primarily derived from the international trade of the Jewish merchants and from also the profits of the Jews who engaged in selling *strazzaria*, while the loan banks had turned into deficit-incurring institutions that were financed by the Jewish community as a whole.<sup>76</sup> His statement that Jewish moneylending was an activity of orphans and widows rather than of traders may reflect the tendency of Jews to invest money that needed to be preserved safely for dowries and other purposes in the loan banks.

Luzzatto again returned to the subject of Jewish moneylending in Venice in detail in the seventeenth consideration of the *Discourse*.<sup>77</sup> There he dealt not with theoretical matters but rather again with practical reality, which serves as a reminder of the immediate impetus for writing the *Discourse*. It was necessary, he related, for Jews everywhere to support themselves in one of three ways: from usury, as in some cities of Italy and Germany; from engaging in the crafts in the city; or from income from rented real estate, as in the Levant. Each of these sources of livelihood had its drawbacks: usury caused the Jews equally disliked by all orders of the city, the exercise of the crafts by the lower orders and the possession of real estate by the noble and powerful. However, he continued, these reasons were not applicable in Venice, where the usury rate was only five percent and the loan banks were established for the convenience of the poor and not for the profit of the Jews, while both engaging in crafts and possessing real estate were prohibited and overseas wholesale commerce and trade fulfilled their needs in such a manner that no group in the city found the Jews a burden or nuisance.<sup>78</sup> Luzzatto's statements on the actual Jewish moneylending activities in Venice are correct; Jewish moneylending in Venice was at a very low interest rate and existed for the benefit of the urban poor and not for the profit of the moneylenders. However, regarding maritime commerce, some of the Christian Venetian merchants still engaged in maritime trade resented the competition of the Jews and claimed that the Jews were usurping their trade.

In summary, Luzzatto's treatment of moneylending conveyed the impression that basically Jews were not encouraged by their own traditions to lend money at interest to Christians. However, because moneylending was an evil that could not be eradicated from human society and because Jews were restricted by Venetian law from engaging in other forms of economic activity, they were permitted to engage

<sup>76</sup> On the question of utility as opposed to necessity, see Robert Bonfil, *Jewish Life*, 29–44.

<sup>77</sup> *Discourse*, 86v–87r.

<sup>78</sup> See Ravid, *Economics and Toleration*, 38–39.

in moneylending; indeed, their moneylending in Venice at the low controlled rate was beneficial to the state and to society and eliminated the need for Christians to lend to each other at interest and therefore they should not be expelled.

## 7 Luzzatto's Treatment of Jewish Moneylending and International Maritime Commerce Compared

A comparison of Luzzatto's treatment of Jewish moneylending with his discussion of Jewish maritime commerce is illuminating. Moneylending and international maritime commerce (along with the *strazzaria* trade which is nowhere mentioned in the *Discourse*) were the only areas of economic enterprise in which the Jews of Venice were specifically authorised to engage, and Luzzatto, seeking to avert a threatened expulsion, needed to demonstrate the great economic utility of the Jews in order to ward off that expulsion.<sup>79</sup> The Venetians had considered maritime commerce to constitute a noble form of economic enterprise to which Venice owed its greatness, and therefore Luzzatto was able to deal with it openly, systematically, and at great length. His main concern was not to justify international maritime commerce itself, although he did so presumably because of the shift to other forms of economic activities, but rather to demonstrate that the Jews were not usurping the position of the native Venetians. In reality, Jews were moving into a sector increasingly abandoned by the native Christian merchants and competing with foreigners, who were much less desirable than were the Jews because they might leave Venice to return to their places of origin and take with them the wealth that they had accumulated in the city.

In the case of moneylending, a subject of condemnation for centuries, Luzzatto could not employ the same arguments he had used in the case of trade. He could not extol the honorable nature of moneylending as a profession, its intrinsic desirability, nor its role in promoting the greatness of Venice, nor single out the essential Jewish role in that field for praise and justification. Yet the reality of the Venetian situation required small-scale pawnbroking to assure that Christians would not engage in lending money to the poor at higher interest rates and this led him to stress the indispensable role of the Jews in moneylending in an institutionalised manner at fixed low interest rates. Consequently, he dealt with the actual situation in Venice in the ninth consideration as a conclusion to his "economic utility" presentation. He introduced his presentation with the correct observation that governments had to provide for the needs of the poor in order to secure domestic tranquility and accordingly justifying the policy of the Venetian government to require the Jews to lend money to the urban poor at the low rate of five percent. The key reason for this

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79 On the question of utility as opposed to necessity, see Robert Bonfil, *Jewish Life*, 29–44.

policy in the eyes of the Venetian authorities, to prevent Christians from engaging in moneylending, was mentioned, although not given as much emphasis as it could have received. Luzzatto was well-aware of the controversies over Jewish moneylending to elaborate further. His main concern was to show that the Venetian Senate had, for valid reasons, required the Jews to engage in moneylending, and thus he implied that any critique of Jewish moneylending would involve impugning the wisdom of the Venetian Senate.

However, since Luzzatto did not restrict his presentation to the economic situation in Venice but also wanted to refute general charges made against the Jews, he was compelled to deal with the attacks on Jewish moneylending. His most detailed treatment is found in the twelfth consideration. First, he established the general principle that the usury of the Jews was barely tolerated by their own laws, and not expressly allowed. Then, he established that the Jews of Venice were basically not moneylenders and indeed were not making any profits from moneylending. Furthermore, he claimed that usury was one of the basic ineradicable human vices and, should the Jews not be involved in it, the situation might become even worse, since the absence of their participation could cause an increase in the interest rate, a point that had been raised on previous occasions by members of the Venetian government in supporting past renewal of the charter of the Jews.

It seems that Luzzatto could have made his case much stronger by differentiating between Jewish moneylending in the form of officially sanctioned pawnbroking for the urban poor that was closely regulated by the authorities and comparable to the permitted Christian *Monti di Pietà*, on the one hand, and on the other, moneylending on a larger scale and at higher interests on the basis of promissory notes or real-estate rather than on small-scale pledges. Such an approach would have allowed him to defend the Jews of Venice while still developing his views on the reprehensibility of moneylending in general.

## 8 Conclusion

To conclude, Luzzatto did not seek, and indeed could not seek, any amelioration in the condition of the Jews of Venice as Toland was to seek in England some eighty years later. Luzzatto had participated in the charter renewal process and knew that the Jews could only hope to obtain from the Venetian government some relatively minor alleviations of the terms under which they lived, especially if they would be in the interests of the government. While an increased understanding of the nature of the Jews on the part of the Venetian nobility might make a few of them more sympathetic and less hostile toward Jews, it could not change their status. Luzzatto believed that it was possible to avert an expulsion since the usual policy of the government had been to renew the charters of the Jewish merchants and moneylenders because of their utility, notwithstanding an on-going undercurrent of hostil-



ity toward them. However, given the nature of the political and economic system in Venice and its generally conservative nature, neither *apologetica* – nor acculturation, wealth, or interaction between a few Jewish and Christian literati – could lead to any amelioration of the status of the Jews in early-modern Venice. The only thing that could bring the Jews any substantial improvement would be the end of the traditional Venetian ancient regime and the elimination of the charter system that regarded the Jews as a foreign community (or in the contemporaneous terminology, “nation”) not capable of possessing any rights of *sudditanza*. No gradual amelioration was possible, but rather a total regime change was necessary. Only when the centuries-old Venetian government fell in 1797, not as a result of internally-motivated political considerations but rather due to conquest by Napoleon Bonaparte, then the special status of the Jews also ended.<sup>80</sup> Thus Luzzatto can be seen as a defense attorney arguing for the maintenance of the *status quo*: Let my people stay. In the process, he contributed a pioneering work in defense of Jews, Judaism, and Jewish economic activity in the Most Serene Republic of Venice.

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<sup>80</sup> See Benjamin Ravid, “The Sephardi Jewish Merchants of Venice, Port Jews, and the Road to Modernity,” in *From Catalonia to the Caribbean: The Sephardic Orbit from Medieval to Modern Times: Essays in Honor of Jane S. Gerber*, eds. Federica Francesconi, Stanley Mirvis, and Brian Smollett (Boston: Leiden, 2018), 117–35.

Giuseppe Veltri

# Individual Responsibility and Collective Punishment in the Thought of Rabbi Simone Luzzatto

Is it possible to punish a family, community, lineage, or nation for a crime perpetrated by a single individual? Is it lawful to let a person's guilt fall on his natural (family) or socio-ethnic circle? This legal issue has never been easy to resolve, whether within national or international legal systems. Article 50 of the Hague Convention of 1907 (Hague IV) establishes: "No general penalty, pecuniary or otherwise, shall be inflicted upon the population on account of the acts of individuals for which they cannot be regarded as jointly and severally responsible."<sup>1</sup>

The Convention sanctioned the application of a general penalty in those cases in which a population could be considered "jointly responsible." This article permitted the application of penalties and provisions whose nature – and especially whose military range – some populations had already experienced. After World War II, following the nefarious abuse of the right to inflict collective penalties, attempts were made at modifying the legislation. Collective penalties were declared illegal by the Geneva Convention of 1949,<sup>2</sup> underlying the right to protection for civilians in times of war. Article 33 states:

No protected person may be punished for an offence he or she has not personally committed. Collective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited. Pillage is prohibited. Reprisals against protected persons and their property are prohibited.<sup>3</sup>

Obviously, the above articles concern war regulations, and war is subject to very specific laws. It is mostly protected persons who are excluded from penalties, and therefore it is not possible to use these regulations to discuss historical processes in which entire groups or societies were punished. However, the fundamental question of whether it would be legitimate to categorically exclude the direct or indirect application of collective punishment in peacetime still stands. From a societal and emotional point of view, there is no doubt that we tend to accuse and condemn an

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1 The texts cited in this essay and relating to the Geneva Convention are available on the websites of many national and international organisations, e.g. the International Committee of the Red Cross ([https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/COM/380-600038?OpenDocument&xp\\_articleSelected=600038](https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/COM/380-600038?OpenDocument&xp_articleSelected=600038), last accessed December 2011).

2 Ibid.

3 On this subject, see Paolo Colombati, "La protezione penale dei diritti umani dal processo di Norimberga allo Statuto di Roma" (PhD diss., University of Trento, 2001–2), 47 ff.

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entire ethnic group, nation, or crowd for an offence committed by an individual. Western laws – and here I want to underline that I am not an expert in either national or international law – establish that the notion of guilt is and should remain individual. Nevertheless, collective punishment in wartime cannot be excluded, especially if a group participated either directly or indirectly in a crime committed by an individual. There are also penalties that, because of the crimes perpetrated by an individual, affect an entire community by limiting its freedom. This usually happens when the freedom of an entire society or the prevention of crime are at stake and need to be defended. In these cases, it is possible to talk about collective responsibility.<sup>4</sup> This is, however, beyond the scope of this essay, which only aims to examine the collective penalty (inflicted on adults or protected persons) for offences committed by individuals.

Therefore, it is not my place to summarise here the long process through which legal systems, and especially criminal law, came to put more emphasis on individual responsibility. It is however important to emphasise how religion played a significant role, in both a positive and a negative manner, as far as individual responsibility is concerned. Adam's sin is explicitly declared as the sin of all humanity. Redemption, by a God which has now become the Christian God, is then to be understood as the redemption of a universal human being. The brand of Christianity originating in Augustinian thought considers sin as the constant characterising factor distinguishing the moral essence of both the individual and the collective. As a consequence, the dilemma still remains.

Judaism is caught between two poles: the first sanctions collective responsibility and the penalty inflicted on the entire Jewish community, freed from the Egyptian yoke, as in the episode of the golden calf; the second is represented by those who are inclined to consider the individual as the root of all evil and to understand sin as an act which the person should individually expiate. As far as collective responsibility is concerned, ancient and medieval Judaism formulated the doctrine according to which the sins of the fathers will fall on their children. There was also an established belief that individual crimes, punished or unpunished, could cause astrophysical phenomena, such as solar or lunar eclipses and earthquakes.<sup>5</sup> This cosmogonic aspect was readopted by ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary Christianity. Individual responsibility before God represents a complex chapter of Jewish doctrine. If on the one hand there is a process of collective expiation during

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<sup>4</sup> On collective penalties as a preventative mechanism, see Mark A. Drumbl, *Atrocity, Punishment, and International Law* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 201–4; on preventive homicide in Jewish law see Giuseppe Veltri, “The Paradox of Jewish Ethics of Martyrdom and Preventive Homicide: Notes on Deviance in Heteronomous & Autonomous Behavior,” in *Devianz und Dynamik. FS für Hubert Seiwert*, ed. Edith Franke et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 47–61.

<sup>5</sup> The belief in the influence of the macrocosm on the microcosm and vice versa is ancient. See Veltri, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 126–27.

Yom Kippur, on the other hand only sins against God can be pardoned, to the exclusion of sins against fellow humans. The latter can only be atoned for by individuals.

Penance for sins, over the course of history, acquired a political dimension whose prerogative is to justify the supremacy of one class over another, and of the majority over a minority. In this way, the argument of collective responsibility becomes subservient to the objective of establishing and maintaining political and psychological control. The Christian explanation of the Jewish Diaspora as a divine punishment is well-exemplified by the legend of the notorious wandering Jew, sentenced by Jesus to roam eternally for having taunted him while he was on his way to Calvary. This myth, probably originating in the Middle Ages, spread throughout Europe thanks to a German pamphlet from 1602 in which the character of Ahasveros or Assueros appears.<sup>6</sup> The fate of Cain, the murderer of his own brother, is cruelly projected onto the entire Jewish people, condemned to wander until the second coming of the Christian Messiah, because of their supposed criminal past. This convenient projection, the product of a clearly anti-Jewish literary imagination, has inspired modern and contemporary authors to produce novels and descriptions that are significantly different from their anti-Semitic matrix.<sup>7</sup>

The expiation of a collective sin was interiorised by Judaism as well. In both the Middle Ages and the modern period, Judaism paradoxically interprets catastrophes and persecutions caused by the Christian majority as divine punishment. Chronicles and funeral lamentations focus on nefarious events and regularly open with a refrain with which historians of Jewish thought and culture are very familiar: "Because of our sins..."<sup>8</sup> However, the current of Jewish thought which developed in the seventeenth century proposing different paradigms for participation in the debate on mass punishments is much less known, despite its antique and medieval literary origins. When speaking of mass punishments, I refer not only to the expulsion of Jews from territories under Spanish rule, but also to other mass "punishments" such as the elimination of entire cultures considered as "sinning cultures."

The court chronologist Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo (1475–1557) in his *Historia general y natural de las Indias* (1535) reports a number of sins against nature committed by Amerindians. In his opinion, those sins justify the mass extermination of this population based on 1 Kings 14:24, where the Canaanites are exterminated be-

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6 The anonymous *Kurze Beschreibung und Erzählung von einem Juden mit Namen Ahasverus* (Leiden: C. Creutzer, 1602), translated into French in 1609 and English in 1640. On the legend of the wandering Jew, see Riccardo Calimani, *Storia dell'ebreo errante* (Milan: Rusconi, 1987); Marcello Massenzio, *La passione secondo l'ebreo errante* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2007). For a reference in English, see George K. Anderson, *The Legend of the Wandering Jew* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1991).

7 I am thinking of the fictional work by Carlo Fruttero and Franco Lucentini, *L'amante senza fissa dimora* (Milan: Mondadori, 1986).

8 See the second chapter of Dean P. Bell, *Jewish Identity in Early Modern Germany: Memory, Power and Community* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2007), 20–27.

cause of their sins against nature.<sup>9</sup> It is not a question of individual sins or collective punishment, but rather of the extermination of lineages and nations based on Christian morality. Collective responsibility is therefore conceived and interpreted in a Christian sense. In his *De Indis recenter inventis et de iure belli hispanorum in barbaros* (1539/40, published in 1557), one of Oviedo's colleagues, the Dominican theologian Francisco de Vitoria, rejects the above Christian moral thesis as a justification for the destruction of a population.

De Vitoria refers to the theme of this introductory essay: the individual responsibility, especially the political responsibility, of minorities. He argues that the crime of theft committed by a Jew or a Saracen must be considered equal to the same crime committed by a Christian.<sup>10</sup> The fact that these individuals are not believers, that is to say, not Christians, should not carry any weight on the scale of justice.

It is precisely because of an uproarious theft that the activity of the Venetian rabbi Simone Luzzatto began. He is the author of a treatise published in 1638 on the condition of the Jews in the city of Venice. To continue our reflection on the theme of crime and punishment, object of this introductory essay, I think it would be worthwhile to examine the life and work of Rabbi Luzzatto a little closer, being also the main subject of this book.

## 1 Life

According to a tradition transmitted by Shmuel David Luzzatto, the whole Luzzatto family stems from Lausitz (in Latin: Lusatia) in north-eastern Germany, a territory nowadays situated within Brandenburg and Saxony. The "German Nation" is actually the first historically documented group of Jews that laid the foundation of the ghetto in 1516. It is not precisely clear when Simone's ancestors moved to Venice. In the dedication of his philosophical book *Socrates* (1651) to the Doge, Luzzatto writes that his ancestors had been living in the city of Venice for more than two hundred years.<sup>11</sup> This information would date their move to the middle of the fifteenth century. The Luzzatto family was deeply involved in one of the most productive activities of the German nation, namely the loan banks, and at the end of the sixteenth century, they became merchants of second-hand items.

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<sup>9</sup> Gonzalo F. de Oviedo, *Historia general y natural de las Indias, Islas y Tierra Firme del Mar Oceano*, ed. José Amador de los Ríos (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1851–55), part 1: book 2, chapter 6 and book 4, chapter 2.

<sup>10</sup> Francisco De Vitoria, *De Indis*, part 2:7; Francisco De Vitoria, *Francisci de Victoria De Indis et De iure belli relectione* (Washington: Carnegie Inst. of Washington, 1917; repr., Buffalo, NY: Hein, 1995).

<sup>11</sup> *Socrates*, s.p.: "Therefore, I, their most humble subject and servant, born under this most happy sky and most noble dominion, as were my ancestors for more than two hundred years."

Included among the modern spirits of the Venetian rabbinate,<sup>12</sup> Simone (Simḥa) Luzzatto was possibly born before 1583. This date remains, however, under discussion. When his *responsus Mish'an mayim* (*The Support of the Waters*) was published in 1606, he was listed among the rabbis of Venice. In his biography *Medabber tahpukhot* (*The Man Who Speaks Wickedly*), Leone Modena's nephew Rabbi Isacco Levita states that when he was ordained, Rabbi Luzzatto was twenty-four years old.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the birth date should be situated earlier than 1583. Leone Luzzatto came to the same conclusion, however he fixed the date to 1583 without further explanation.<sup>14</sup>

Simone Luzzatto's recently discovered testament, dating back to 20 June 1662, does not give further information about his birth date, but it does supply information about his biography and family. His wife Uzelina/Uselina or Teghele gave him a son, Isach, who died young, and two daughters, Gloria or Ghele, and Diamante or Lipet. He left everything to his nephew, Isach's son, Rabbi Moisè Luzzatto.<sup>15</sup>

Luzzatto spent most of his long life in Venice studying mathematics, literature, and philosophy and fulfilling his role as the rabbi of the Scola Tedesca until at least 1661,<sup>16</sup> as well as being the director of the Talmudic academy (*rosh yeshivah*).<sup>17</sup> The recently discovered documents from the Archivio di Stato di Venezia provide scholars with better information about his connections, interests, and involvement in the family's businesses. We now know that Luzzatto's cousin Neḥemiyah had left the money that had allowed the establishment of the Scola Luzzatta. Furthermore, the family had pursued a marriage strategy to promote strategic alliances with other important families in several Jewish communities. Luzzatto himself had a share in an insurance company for mercantile ships.<sup>18</sup> He died in 1663.

12 Edgardo Morpurgo, "Samuel David Luzzatto e la sua famiglia," *La Rassegna mensile d'Israel* 39 (1973): 622–23.

13 See Shulvass, *Ma'amar*, 9, and the annexed sources.

14 Shmuel David Luzzatto, *Autobiografia di S. D. Luzzatto preceduta da alcune notizie storico-letterarie sulla famiglia Luzzatto a datare dal secolo decimosesto*. Mosè, *Antologia Israelitica* di Corfù, 1878; Padova: Crescini, 1878, appendix 2, 33. Simone Luzzatto was born in 1583 and died on 6 January 1663.

15 Giuseppe Veltri, Gianfranco Miletto, and Guido Bartolucci, "The Last Will and Testament of Simone Luzzatto (1583?–1663) and the Only Known Manuscript of the *Discorso* (1638). Newly Discovered Manuscripts from the State Archive of Venice and the Marciana Library, Venice," *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 5 (2011): 125–46.

16 In the introduction to his autobiography, ShaDaL (Shmuel David Luzzatto) describes his ancestor as follows: "Simeone (Simḥa) Luzzatto, rabbino di Venezia, meno conosciuto forse di quanto meritasse, accoppiava a grande dottrina rabbinica molta classica erudizione ed un profondo sapere in politica e in filosofia." *Autobiografia*, 13–14. A witness by Abraham Porto testifies that Luzzatto was the Rabbi of the Scola Tedesca. See Giuseppe Veltri, "Saggio Introduttivo," XXII. He recalls that "Simone Luzato" and Mosheh Treves (Moisè Treves) were the rabbis of the "sinagoga de Todeschi" at the beginning of 1661.

17 Moshe Shulvass, in his introduction to Lattes (*Ma'amar*, 9–26), writes that Luzzatto had been rabbi from 1606 and *rosh yeshivah* since the death of Leone Modena in 1648.

18 See Veltri, *Filosofo e Rabbino*, part 3: "Studi Storici e Documenti Inediti dall'Archivio di Stato di Venezia," 426–29.

By contrast, this same archival research has revealed nothing about Luzzatto's personal library. The amount and extent of his culture is therefore left to scholars to determine by means of an in-depth analysis of his Hebrew and Italian works. Until now, these works have remained the sole expression of the richness of his thought, which stemmed not only from his juridical and religious commitments, but also and mainly from his engagement with classical and modern philosophy and political thought.

Luzzatto authored two works in Italian – the political treatise entitled *Discourse on the State of the Jews* (Venice, 1638) and a philosophical dialogue entitled *Socrates or on Human Knowledge* (Venice, 1651) – and several shorter works in Hebrew.<sup>19</sup> The Italian works in particular have enabled readers to appreciate the results of his studies which involved both classical and secular knowledge and have become the subject of both praise and study.<sup>20</sup>

## 2 Hebrew Works

With a few exceptions, Luzzatto's Hebrew works<sup>21</sup> are not as well known as his Italian works. Furthermore, it may seem somewhat paradoxical, but the most quoted *responsum* by Luzzatto is the halakhic discussion of travelling by gondola on Shabbat, the text of which has never been retrieved but is only quoted by Lampronti in his *Paḥad Yiṣḥaq* (*The Fear of Isaac*, 1750) in the entry for “sfinah” (“ship”). Further details are not known. Lampronti only informs his readers that the council of rabbis rejected his *responsum*.<sup>22</sup>

Beyond the discussion of his published and unpublished Hebrew works, it is also important to recall that Luzzatto played the roles of *poseq* (a halakhic scholar who has the power to decide on issues of rabbinic law) and *maskim* (a scholar who has the power to give the *nihil obstat*). He signed many *ketubbot* (nuptial agreements) and he also gave his approbation to the publication of Joseph Solomon Delmedigo's *Sefer Elim* (Amsterdam, 1629).

Luzzatto's unpublished Hebrew works have been traced by Giuseppe Veltri and his team. Among them, there are some *responsa*, preserved together with texts by

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<sup>19</sup> See next section.

<sup>20</sup> Isaac Barzilay, “The Italian and Berlin Haskalah (Parallels and Differences),” in *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 29 (1960–61): 17–51, 32.

<sup>21</sup> I am especially thankful to Dr. Lennart Lehmhaus, who worked on the Hebrew works of Luzzatto as part of the former DFG Luzzatto project at the Martin Luther Universität Halle-Wittenberg.

<sup>22</sup> Lampronti, *Paḥad Yiṣḥaq*, volume 7, 57a–59b; Luzzatto's *responsum* is quoted on page 58b. See Veltri and Lissa, “Come attraversar il canale.”

Leone Modena.<sup>23</sup> These works, however, still await and deserve further in-depth analysis.

## 2.1 Published Hebrew Works

Luzzatto's published Hebrew works are as follows: the *Mish'an Mayyim* (*The Support of the Waters*), included in the collective volume *Mashbit Milḥamot* (*The End of the Wars*, Venice 1606, reprinted in 1981 in Jerusalem); some letters published in Jacob ben Elchanan Heilbronn's volume *Nahalat Ya'aqov* (*Ya'aqov's Inheritance*, Padova, 1623); and an introduction to Ecclesiastes published in Shmuel Ha-Cohen di Pisa Lusitano *Ṣafnat Pa'neah* (*The Enigma Solver*, Venice, 1656).

*The Support of the Waters* is the longest and most well-known Hebrew work by Luzzatto. The circumstances that brought him to write and publish the work are connected to a discussion that soon turned into a quarrel about the purity of the *miqweh* (ritual bath for women) in Rovigo. The quarrel was essentially a power struggle in the local Jewish community. Rav Avtalyon had been the rabbi for ten years and he was also responsible for the purity of the *miqweh* in the house of his brother, Rav Yequtiel. When he happened to visit his brother's house, Rav Avtalyon noticed that he had made some renovations which infringed on the ritual purity of the bathwater. Therefore, every woman who used this bath would be declared *niddah* (ritually impure). He also ordered the building of another bath. There arose a harsh polemic, whose stages can be retraced from the rabbinic *responsa* issued in the *Milḥamot ha-Shem* (*The Wars of the Lord*, 1605).

As for Rav Yequtiel, he reacted by asking for the help and advice of several renowned rabbis, who confirmed the ritual compliance of his bath. Their *responsa* were published in *The Support of the Waters*, where Luzzatto's *responsum* is also included. Rav Avtalyon retorted with a booklet entitled *Miqweh Yisrael* (*The Ritual Bath of Israel*, 1606) and in 1607 he also issued a *responsum* whose title is *Palge Mayyim* (*The Stream of Water*).

Luzzatto's *responsum* is the last of the seven *responsa* published in *The Support of the Waters*. His text is well organised. At the beginning, he introduces an index of the arguments he will use to support his reasoning. The discussion is divided into three parts: in the first, he discusses why the water system and supplies conform to the halakhic precepts. In the second part, he refutes the *responsa* of the rabbis who were opposed to Rav Yequtiel. Finally, he responds to Rav Avtalyon, who had argued that since he was the local rabbinic authority, nobody had the right to contest his decisions.

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<sup>23</sup> Jerusalem, The Jewish National and University Library, Ms. Heb. 8° 2001, fols. 521–25; New York, Jewish Theological Seminary, Ms. 1343, fols. 16a–20a; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Mich. 196, fols. 60a–75b; Mantova, Comunità Israelitica, Ms. ebr. 88, fols. 12a–13a; 14b–16b; 99a–102a; 148a–150a; Amsterdam, Universitätsbibliothek, Ms. Rosenthal 281; Cincinnati, Hebrew Union College 164.



The five letters addressed to his master Jacob ben Elchanan Heilbronn and published in the book *Ya'aqov's Inheritance* are much shorter than *The Support of the Waters*, but there Luzzatto also gives his opinion about halakhic issues such as the transportation of a corpse on Shabbat; the prohibition on a couple living together before the nuptial ceremony; a discussion about loan and usury; a controversy between his masters and other rabbis who accused him of dealing with the Kabbalah; and a dispute about monetary issues between two brothers.

The introduction to *The Enigma Solver* is a much later text published in 1656, after Luzzatto had already published the *Socrates*. However, this remains a very interesting text, since it allows us to test his philosophical knowledge and his sceptical method in a Hebrew text meant for his colleagues, the rabbis, and his coreligionists. Formally, it has the style of a biblical commentary dealing with the pivotal issue of whether Job denied the resurrection of the dead or not. By using a mix of Talmudic dialectic and a fictional process, Luzzatto demonstrates that Job did not deny the resurrection of the dead.

### 3 *The Discourse on the State of the Jews* (1638)

During his long life, Luzzatto wrote two Italian works, the *Discourse* and the *Socrates or on Human Knowledge*, a translation of which is published alongside the present volume. The shared features between the two works as well as the coherent development of Luzzatto's philosophical and political thought is to be found in the sceptical method he uses in both his investigations: the sceptical political investigation in defence of the Jewish people in the *Discourse*, and the sceptical philosophical investigation in the *Socrates*.

I will introduce the *Discourse* here with a history of the printing of the work, a summary of the main themes discussed in it, and a discussion of its reception.

#### 3.1 The Historical Context and the Printing History of the Work

Recent archival research has demonstrated that the text of the *Discourse* published in Venice by Gioanne Calleoni in 1638 may have gone through different stages of composition. In 2010, Guido Bartolucci traced the first and to this day only known manuscript of the work, copied in a collection of several different fragments of political works dating back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, preserved in the Contarini family archive. This manuscript differs from the printed version in several ways. First of all, it includes only one introduction, entitled "Introduction to the Whole Work," followed by considerations I to III. Furthermore, there are no Latin quotes, as there are in the printed version. It still remains unclear whether this is a first basic version of the *Discourse*, later expanded and turned into the one

with which we are familiar today, or whether it is an abridged version based on the printed text.<sup>24</sup>

The *Discourse* has generally been considered an apology for the Jewish community of Venice. Some scholars claim that the immediate cause, the stimulus that moved Luzzatto to compose a plea for recognition of the status of the Jews of Venice, was a recent and unexpected event. In 1636, a quantity of merchandise was stolen from the main shopping thoroughfare of Venice, the Merceria.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, the significance of the *Discourse* goes beyond the contingent problem of a single episode and a rhetorical plea for grace. As a tract in defence of a minority, the author's attitude is surprisingly modern: he does not presents the Jews as supplicants begging for the authority's good favour; rather, they request only to be respected for their capabilities; that is, for their political and economic usefulness to their society.

### 3.2 The Structure of the Discourse: The Main Content and Purpose

The *Discourse* appears at first glance to be little more than a modest and uncomplicated tractate, true to its ostensible purpose of introducing the Jews and Judaism (of Venice) to the Venetian "lovers of truth" – hence the title of the introduction. Yet concealed within it are a multiplicity of topics, themes, and concise observations, which, taken together, make it a highly complex composition presumably intended to respond to diverse circumstances. It consists of eighteen considerations introduced by a "Dedication," a "Preface to the Entire Work," and an "Introduction to This Treatise." The presence of two introductions could be seen as the remnants of an original plan by the author to publish a more extensive essay. Of such a plan there is, however, no other trace, either in the book itself or in Luzzatto's other extant publications. I would suggest that they rather reflect the structure of *Discourse* as it has come down to us. It is made up of two parts, the first concentrating more on the particular situation of the Jews of Venice (considerations I to X), the second focused on the more substantial questions of the status of the Jews in Europe and the world at that time. Consideration XI begins, indeed, with the topic dealt with in the preface to the work as a whole, namely that of the difficulty in formulating a universal definition of Jewish customs, and "that their [of the Jews] misdemeanours could easily be prevented." The second introduction is concerned primarily with the subject dealt with in the first part of the book, that of the condition of the Jews in Venice and their "usefulness."

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<sup>24</sup> See Veltri, Miletto, and Bartolucci, "The Last Will."

<sup>25</sup> See Benjamin Ravid, "The Venetian context of the *Discourse*," paragraph 2 "The Incident of 1636–37," 250–55.

The *Discourse* opens with a dedication (3r–v) to the Doge of Venice (Francesco Erizzo, Doge from 1631 to 1646) and his council, who are deemed “lovers of truth,” recalling the political vision found in Polybius, which speaks of rulers as princes not only because of their noble origins, but also as an expression of their virtue. The dedication contains some important statements:

1. The “Jewish nation” can be compared to an artistic object.<sup>26</sup> This first sentence serves as both a *captatio benevolentiae* and as a (bitter) prediction that Luzzatto’s “discourse” cannot hope for a more favourable destiny than that of the Jewish people in their history.
2. The Jewish nation is itinerant and dispersed (“*vaga e dispersa*”), deprived of a protector. It is Luzzatto’s hope that this same destiny will not be shared by the little book offered to the public. This characterisation of Jewish destiny should not obscure the fact that he will actually be portraying the positive nature of Jewish existence. Indeed, he compares his book to the infant Moses, “the celebrated legislator,”<sup>27</sup> who was rescued from the waters, as it were, by the enemy, the Pharaoh’s own daughter. Luzzatto is here employing a known *topos* of Jewish historiography, with a positive twist: the ruling political power can, at times, be helpful in raising the Jews up from their current (slavish) status.
3. The purpose of his book is to cause the Jewish nation to be “advocated,” or at least “excused.” The plain meaning is obvious: Luzzatto wishes his people to be exonerated of all guilt attached to their being Jews.
4. Luzzatto’s hope is for the Jews to become a positive, integrated element of Venetian society.

In the “Preface to the Entire Work” (5r–6v), Luzzatto repeats that he intends to show that “if [the Jewish people] is not advocated, at least let it be excused.” To this end, he provides a brief overview, touching on the subject and origins of his tractate, his commitment as an author, the readers he wants to address, and concluding with a *peroratio* on Judaism as a fragment of past beauty. Luzzatto’s own description of the tractate leaves the impression that it is nothing but a compendium of the rites and opinions of the Jews.<sup>28</sup> In fact, however, his main point will focus on the practical attitude of the Jews in their day-to-day lives and in their commercial and social dealings. Especially intriguing is Luzzatto’s comparison of Jewish history and tradition with the sculpture of Phidias and Lysippus in its Renaissance reception: in the

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<sup>26</sup> The word “nation” in Luzzatto should be interpreted as “gens” or “genus” (“ethnic and cultural entity” or “progeny”), here usually translated as “people.”

<sup>27</sup> *Discourse*, 3r.

<sup>28</sup> *Discourse*, 5r: “I brought myself to compose a concise but truthful account of this Nation’s principal rites and most commonly shared opinions, which are not in conflict with those that are universal.” This assertion proves that the *Discourse* is not an “an appendix to the treatise about the opinions and dogmas of the Jews,” as the subtitle of the books reads.

preface, he describes the Jewish people as a “relic of the Ancient Jewish People.” They are portrayed as a “deteriorated fragment of an aged statue.”<sup>29</sup> Seen as a surviving fragment from the works of an artist comparable to the most famous Greek sculptors, the Jews become an object that could be of great value in the eyes of a “curious antique dealer.”<sup>30</sup> The Jews, he points out, are an ancient people. Although they have been “deformed” by their troubles and “disfigured” through their long years of captivity, they received the rules that govern their society and the institutions by which they live from the divine Creator, as is generally recognised. It is not by chance that Luzzatto draws the comparison to Phidias and Lysippus: when Istanbul was plundered during the Fourth Crusade in 1204, the Venetians seized four gold-plated bronze horses, thought to be the work of the sculptor Lysippus, and carried them away. They were placed on top of the facade of the Basilica of San Marco, and this *Quadriga* came to be seen as the symbol of Venetian power.<sup>31</sup> This power was now in danger of being geographically fragmented and economically crushed by the growing might of the Ottoman Empire.

Luzzatto prefaces his treatise with an introduction (7r–8r), ostensibly intended to provide a theoretical outline of the political and economic aspects of his subject, a reflection also of his vision of the customs and ways of life followed by the Jews of the Diaspora. In this introduction to the “entire” tractate, he deals, in fact, with only *one* issue: the status of the Jews of Venice and their economic situation, which is, in turn, the topic to which the entire first part of the *Discourse* is devoted. Luzzatto clearly states his central thesis right from the outset: the ancient Jewish people, today present in the illustrious city of Venice, is, in its constitution and way of life, a “fragment” of God’s original creation.<sup>32</sup> Nobody, he claims, can contest the proposition that the Venetian Jews are a “reward” (“*emolumento*”) for the city of Venice and that they constitute an integral part of the common population.<sup>33</sup>

Luzzatto once again avails himself of the metaphor of the fragment, this time in a variant form: the Jewish community of Venice is like a Democritean atom in the Milky Way of the Venetian *res publica*. Although he has serious doubts as to the cosmological value of Democritus’s philosophy, he seems to accept its usefulness as a source of metaphor: “This opinion was condemned, but because the two philosophers asserted the casual coupling of small bodies, not because of the absurdity of the conception.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Discourse*, 6v.

<sup>30</sup> For Machiavelli’s *Discourses* as a source for this passage, see *Discourse*, 6v n. 8.

<sup>31</sup> On this aspect, see Patricia Fortini Brown, *Art and Life in Renaissance Venice* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997).

<sup>32</sup> *Discourse*, 6v: “Moreover, it is common consensus among men that this People once took [its] form of government and institution of life from the Highest Opifex.”

<sup>33</sup> *Discourse*, 7v.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 7r.

The purpose of Luzzatto's treatise is not to celebrate the antiquity of the Jews, but rather to present some of the advantages they bring to the State. He considers the Jewish people an integral part of the city of Venice or, better, of the entire world. The function of the Jews, he claims, is similar to that of the atoms of Democritus that populate the "Lower World," which, in turn, feeds the sun, the moon, and the other stars with its vapour – a Stoic idea. In this sense, every kingdom on earth is comparable to the galaxy.<sup>35</sup>

The metaphors Luzzatto uses to describe the composition of society serve to draw attention to a specific point: that every element of a society, in particular that of Venice, should be fully integrated, as a prerequisite to their contribution to the welfare of the whole. This is also the logic of the human body, as Luzzatto expressly indicates, indirectly citing the fable of Menenius Agrippa:<sup>36</sup>

So too, when our stomach suffers from lack of food, it subsists on humours from our other limbs, with their subsequent pains and ailments. [But when the opposite occurs, and there is] an abundance of nourishment, not only does our stomach stop the plundering, it also allows its own nourishment to circulate to other parts of the body. Similarly, the preponderance of duties and the taxation of pack animals not only releases the people from the burden of high taxes and contributions – which they would be obliged to pay for the needs and requirements of the prince – [but it also implies that] they [the very same people] profit from an abundance of public money.<sup>37</sup>

In the sixteenth century, the metaphor of the stomach becomes more specific: in 1612, Francis Bacon writes in his "Of Empire," 11:

For their *Merchants*; They are *Vena porta*; And if they flourish not, a Kingdome may have good Limmes, but will have empty Veines, and nourish little. Taxes, and Imposts upon them, doe seldome good to the Kings Revenew; For that that he winnes in the Hundred, he leese in the Shire; The particular Rates being increased, but the totall Bulke of Trading rather decreased.<sup>38</sup>

Luzzatto substantially agrees with Bacon. Taxes on imports and exports are lethal for an economy because they lead to a decrease in trade volume. In the end, the state treasury will end up with little more than usual. In addition, there is also a moral aspect that should be taken into consideration: the state should avoid imitating the ancient Romans who "ultimately imposed taxes on human excrement [...]. Even disgraceful and obscene proceedings [such as these] contributed to enriching

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<sup>35</sup> See Bacon, *Essayes* XIX, "Of Empire," 63: "Princes are like to *Heavenly Bodies*, which cause good or evill times; And which have much Veneration, but no Rest. All precepts concerning Kings, are in effect comprehended, in those two Remembrances: *Memento quod es Homo*; And *Memento quod es Deus, or Vice Dei*: The one bridleth their Power, and the other their Will." On the classical origin of the idea, see Albert I. Ellis, "Some Notes," *The Classical Review* 23 (1909): 246–47.

<sup>36</sup> Livy, *From the Founding of the City* II:32.

<sup>37</sup> *Discourse*, 7v.

<sup>38</sup> See Bacon, *Essayes* XIX, "Of Empire," 62.

the treasury.” In contrast to this moral depravity on the part of the ruling power, the Republic of Venice “has the custom of imposing taxes only on the industry of men, and not on their lives; of punishing their vices and not profiting from them.”<sup>39</sup> Here there are the principal ingredients of Luzzatto’s political theory: 1) the Jews of Venice are an integral part of the Republic; 2) their function in commerce is vital, and can be of true benefit only if the taxes imposed remain limited, since the taxes on imports and exports have a lethal effect on the general economy; 3) the Republic of Venice is founded on morality and not on profit.

Having looked more closely at the themes introduced in the prefatory considerations, I would like now to sketch the outlines of the main subjects Luzzatto deals with in each and every consideration. Consideration I deals with the benefits of trade for the city of Venice and the industriousness of the Jews. Luzzatto’s treatise, he explains, is a response to the accusation that the Jews had usurped their current commercial role. In consideration II, three points are examined: Venice in the history of commerce and its expansion and retreat from active trading; the areas of commercial influence surrendered to foreigners; and lastly, the causes of Venice’s retreat from active commerce. In consideration III, Luzzatto deals with the causes of stagnation in the increase of economic wealth,<sup>40</sup> a natural process comparable to the development of the human body. For cities, the “natural” process of stagnation first begins when the city has reached sufficient wealth, in terms of both population and economic prosperity. Luzzatto introduces here a discussion of commerce handled by so-called foreigners (i.e. non-Venetians). The “foreigners,” he argues, take the place of the inhabitants in the economic functions of the city, thereby increasing their own wealth. Foreigners do not only not increase a city’s wealth, but they also diminish it, because their profit returns with them to their places of origin. There are two possible reactions to the “foreign” interference in and control of economic trade. The first is to place a ban on their merchandise, which can be a total ban on all trading activities by foreigners, a partial ban touching only certain goods, or an increase in duties. The second alternative is to incorporate the “foreigners” into the city by making them citizens. The first option was chosen in England under Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth. This same path was not open to Italy, however, due both to the fragmentation of rule over different territories and to the absence of sufficient ships to replace those of the foreigners – in whose absence trade would then have ceased entirely. At the same time, Luzzatto argues, the integration of foreigners into Venetian society is, for a variety of reasons, problematic. On the one hand, there is the natural, instinctive attachment of the foreigner to his home country and the social position he holds there. On the other hand, the scarcity of lands in and around Venice also has to be considered. Finally, it will be necessary to contend

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<sup>39</sup> *Discourse*, 8r.

<sup>40</sup> *Discourse*, 12v–18r.

with the integrated foreigners' desire to gain extraordinary honours and titles and to make themselves illustrious. The only remaining solution for the revival of commerce and trade is, accordingly, to commission the Jews to conduct international trade, for the Jews have no homeland and do not aspire to dignities, titles, or honours. For the Jews as well, the city-state of Venice is the best place in which to live in all the world. In his own words:

Moreover, there is no doubt that among all the states and places of the world, the Jewish Nation feels comfortable with this most pleasant government of the Most Serene Republic, because the form of its stable rule does not change according to the mutability of the thoughts of one ruler or depending on the instigation of counsellors. Furthermore, the Republic, through its special instinct, is a lover of peace with its neighbours, for the Jewish Nation know very well that in times of war they are the first to be exposed to the extortion of allied soldiers, to the enemy's pillaging, and to the impositions and levies of the rulers.<sup>41</sup>

In the following two considerations, Luzzatto expands on his arguments for the presence and activity of the Jews as a preferable alternative to the "foreigners" because of their expertise in trade (consideration IV) and their lack of a homeland and "promptness in obeying" (consideration V).

Consideration VI opens with some general considerations of sociological interest. It presents the theory that the mercantile profession should be distinct from all others, in order to guarantee social peace and harmony and to prevent disobedience and seditious conspiracies (social and economic pragmatism). Further, limits should be placed on the accumulation of capital, in order to avoid social imbalances (consideration VII).

The best, most cautious politician has the duty of ensuring that the wealth and resources of the city are divided and distributed among the citizens into suitable mathematical proportions according to the rules dictated by distributive justice. This must be done in such a way that even when some members of the city acquire the greater part of the profits, the others are not subject to deprivation and poverty.<sup>42</sup>

Luzzatto employs terminology in his discussion of the "fluidity" of cash that calls to mind the economic theories of Antonio Serra,<sup>43</sup> who some years earlier had recommended the accumulation of cash rather than of buildings and land as a means of ensuring the solidity of state finances.

Consideration VIII is the core of the first part of the *Discourse*. In it, Luzzatto enumerates the "profits" that the Jewish people bring, both in commerce and in the

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<sup>41</sup> *Discourse*, 15v–16r. For a comment on this passage, see Ravid, *Economics*, 63–64 n. 60.

<sup>42</sup> *Discourse*, 25r.

<sup>43</sup> Antonio Serra, *Breve trattato delle cause che possono far abbondare li regni d'oro e d'argento dove non sono miniere* (Naples: Lazzaro Scoriggio, 1613, repr., ed. Leonardo Granata, Mendicino-Cosenza: Santelli, 1998). English Translation: Antonio Serra, *A Short Treatise on the Wealth and Poverty of the Nations (1613)*, ed. Sophus A. Reinert (London, New York, Delhi: Anthem Press, 2011).

payment of taxes, without imposing on the state for intervention in the community. As a specific example, he mentions the defence of the community, which is incumbent upon the Jews themselves. On the matter of the “profits” brought in by the Jews, consideration IX is of particular importance: here, Luzzatto deals with the issues of usury and the charging of interest in relation to the advantages and profits the Jewish people bring to Venice. Luzzatto concludes the first part of the treatise with the claim, in consideration X, that the protection accorded to the Jews by the government does honour to that government.

From these remarks, it can be concluded that it is no less honourable for the Venetian prince to exercise protection towards the Jewish Nation than it is profitable, because of the aforementioned gains resulting from the entrance fees. These profits not only help to increase the treasury he must share with private citizens, but [his engagement in protecting the Jews is especially honourable] for bringing glory, which is the personal attribute of princes and great monarchs.<sup>44</sup>

A short remark is in order here concerning the concept of usury, on which there is a convergence of opinion between Luzzatto and Francis Bacon. Bacon is, admittedly, opposed to usury – whereby the term “usury” in Luzzatto *and* Bacon refers not to the practice of lending money at exorbitant rates of interest, but simply the lending of money at interest, regardless of the rate<sup>45</sup> – but is also aware of the advantages of this activity. In his essay on usury, he enumerates the advantages and disadvantages of lending on interest, and draws attention, among other things, to the dangers of capitalisation:

The Fourth, that it bringeth the Treasure of a Realme or State, into a few Hands. For the Usurer being at Certainities, and others at Uncertainties, at the end of the Game; Most of the Money will be in the Boxe; And ever a State flourisheth, when Wealth is more equally spread.<sup>46</sup>

Luzzatto, too, refers to the ideal of greater equality in the distribution of wealth, always desired but never achieved. He states:

However, the aspiration to a rigorous reduction of one’s possessions to a moderate size has been considered a desirable undertaking to this day, but it is hardly ever practised, especially with regard to the equal distribution of moveable assets and cash. Whenever this was attempted with real estate, the result was, for the most part, unsuccessful.<sup>47</sup>

Bacon takes a very pragmatic stand in that whoever thinks it possible for money to be lent without profit enters *ipso dicto* into the realm of utopia:

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<sup>44</sup> Discourse, 35v.

<sup>45</sup> For Luzzatto, see Ravid, “Moneylending,” 262.

<sup>46</sup> Bacon, *Essayes*, XLI, “Of Usury,” 125–6.

<sup>47</sup> Discourse, 25v.



That it is a Vanitie to conceive, that there would be Ordinary Borrowing without Profit; And it is impossible to conceive, the Number of Inconveniences, that will ensue, if Borrowing be Cramped. Therefore, to speake of the Abolishing of Usury is Idle. All States have ever had it, in one Kinde or Rate, or other. So as that Opinion must be sent to Utopia.<sup>48</sup>

In his response to certain criticisms of usury, voiced by both philosophers and statesmen, Luzzatto uses the same argument, focusing on the stimuli that give rise to the ubiquitous phenomenon of moneylending:

Usury should be judged in the same way, as a sin continuously damned, but practised in every time and place. Two great incentives contribute to its increase: the need of the borrower, [42v] who has to pay the amount of usury, and the insatiable greed of the lender who receives it. Both incentives actually stem from our human fragility. If such a transgression were not committed by a Jew, there would be no lack of others who would practise such a contemptible profession through greater extortion of the poor and needy, thereby reducing the number of [Jewish] usurers.<sup>49</sup>

Bacon sums up his opinion on the integration of usury into the economic system: usury should be reserved for a small group under the control of the authorities, for “it is better to mitigate usury, by declaration, than to suffer it to rage, by connivance.”<sup>50</sup>

Consideration X closes the first part of the *Discourse* with the claim that the protection of the Jews is a magnanimous yet profitable act for the Doge and his government, drawing a comparison between the relationship between Joseph and the Pharaoh as recounted in Genesis.

The first ten considerations present a logical argument, concluding with the affirmation of the economic, social, and political suitability of the Jews for the conduct of commerce and of their trustworthiness towards the city of Venice. There is nobody else who can perform the task. The rhetorical style is far removed from a *peroratio*, or a *petitio*. There is some pride in the achievement of the Jews and even some criticism concerning the high interest rates they are compelled to demand. The text is, of course, an apology for Judaism and the Jewish presence in Venice, but it also serves as a caveat against their expulsion from the city.

Consideration XI marks the beginning of part 2 of the *Discourse*. Luzzatto begins by observing, with Socrates, that a human being is nothing but “a multiplicity of different animals, wrapped around each other and entangled with themselves.”<sup>51</sup> If the condition of a single man in all his multiplicity is to be considered a “a very arduous and difficult endeavour,”<sup>52</sup> he argues, then arriving at a judgment on an

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<sup>48</sup> Bacon, *Essayes*, XLI, “Of Usury,” 126.

<sup>49</sup> *Discourse*, 42r–v.

<sup>50</sup> See below, 292.

<sup>51</sup> *Discourse*, 35v.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 37r.

entire group of people, such as the Jews, for example, must *a maiori* be all the more complicated. Their only common, and essential, characteristic is “a firmness and inexpressible tenacity in the observance of their faith and a uniformity of dogma regarding their beliefs during the course of 1,550 years of dispersion in the world.”<sup>53</sup>

Although dispersed throughout the world, the Jews are united by sharing the same religion and common roots, which comes to expression in mutual acts of human charity and hospitality among them. Having offered his praise of Jewish solidarity and unity, Luzzatto can introduce the main point, which is at the heart of his interest: Jewish criminality and its punishment. Two classes of crime are considered here. The first is criminal activity that can be “cured,” that is, “overcome by the doctor alone with ordinary purges and draining.”<sup>54</sup> The second class is of a more perilous nature: it encompasses criminal activity that is communicable and must be treated with harsh punishment. Luzzatto lists here “treason of a population (against the state), a deviation from the former religion, the invasion of a city, or an uprising against order and the civil State” as crimes that should be punished by “exile, prison, galleys, mutilation of limbs, and death sentences, which suffices to eradicate such crimes.”<sup>55</sup>

When punishment is required, the judge should punish only the individual and not the group or “nation” to which the individual belongs. In the case of the adoration of the Golden Calf and the mutiny of Korah, the punishment concerned the entire population only because the inclination to the crime was shared by each individual. In such cases, “it is thus sometimes necessary for the supreme prince to intervene with the legitimate power of his title and his supreme authority.”<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, since that time, “The criminal acts of the Jews were never of such a harmful nature – neither in the city of Venice nor in other places throughout the course of approximately 1,550 years.”<sup>57</sup> And further:

Nowadays it would be an unpersuasive [argument] for the king of Spain to decide to rigorously expel all Granadans, a people so numerous and full of farmers and other artisans, because of some act of larceny, assassination, or any other offence committed by 15 or 20 of these people. It is unlikely that he would follow that resolution so detrimental to his kingdom and so surprising for the whole world as a response to such trifling crimes. Yet the secret reasons for such a severe decree were surely justified because he uncovered a secret conspiracy that was about to pervade the entire Granadan Nation. Therefore, it might well deserve slaughter instead of exile. There is no doubt that condemning the many for the crime of the one is against natural law and the teaching of divine law.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 38r.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 38v.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 38v–39r.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 39v.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 40r.

The logic of Luzzatto's argument is perfectly clear: the criminal acts of an individual, such as the abandonment of his own religion, fall under the responsibility of the individual involved. To this principle, Luzzatto contrasts the procedure, which was unfortunately quite common, of expelling the entire community in punishment for the criminal acts of individuals.

Consideration XII addresses the criticism of the Jewish presence as voiced by three different groups: religious zealots, politicians and statesmen, and the common people. The religious zealots claim that toleration of a religion that differs from the official faith is contemptuous. Politicians argue that it is not desirable to tolerate a diversity of religions in the same city, both because of the possibility of sacrilege being committed and because of the bad example that one group may provide to another. The common people simply believe and repeat any calumny and false slander invented out of hatred for the Jewish nation. In response to the religious zealots, Luzzatto notes that the pope himself admits Jews into the city of his own residence and that they have been living there for over 800 years. To the politicians, he offers a very detailed response, stressing the physical separation between Jews and Christians, which is reinforced by Jewish law, according to which ritual contact and sexual relations with non-Jews are prohibited, as is proselytism. As for the crime of usury practised by the Jews, he adds that it is only tolerated by their laws rather than expressly permitted and, referring indirectly to Francis Bacon (see above), he states:

If such a transgression were not committed by a Jew, there would be no lack of others who would practise such a contemptible profession through greater extortion of the poor and needy, thereby reducing the number of [Jewish] usurers [...]. I do not say this to defend such actions, but merely to demonstrate that such an enormous transgression, like some others, is not an essential prerogative of the Jews, as many presume to assert, but rather an accidental result of the strictness of the life and conditions of the time.<sup>59</sup>

As for the denunciations of the common people, Luzzatto responds:

Truth alone is harsh, and not very pleasing, whereas falsity is admirable and delightful. The former is subject to the occurrence of events; the latter free and wanton. The former is produced by the action of the object that impresses truth in our mind, while the latter depends upon human judgment, and as if it were our offspring, we harbour loving affection for it.<sup>60</sup>

He then deals more specifically with the calumny of accusing the Jews of being unfaithful and with their purported friendship with pirates. Contrary to what his opponents maintain, Luzzatto describes the Jews as a harmonious part of society, living in reciprocal sympathy with their neighbours, in keeping with the will of God, who "decreed that all humankind should live together in mutual friendship. Every

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 42v.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 43v.

human being should regard himself or herself as a citizen of one republic.”<sup>61</sup> Religious differences, as he points out in consideration XIV, are by no means a good reason for war.<sup>62</sup>

Consideration XV is the longest in the *Discourse*. There, Luzzatto is ostensibly addressing the criticism launched against Judaism by Tacitus. As has already been demonstrated in great detail, however, the true focus of his attention is the criticism voiced by Machiavelli.<sup>63</sup>

Considerations XI to XV are, in essence, apologetic, an attempt to counter current opinions concerning the Jews. The considerations that follow are a characterisation of the Jewish “nation.” In consideration XVI, there is also a change of rhetorical genre. Here, Luzzatto discusses Judaism in a descriptive manner, portraying the Jews as a group and focusing particularly on their attachment to study. In this context, he also discusses the distinction between various classes of sages. In this frequently translated and quoted consideration, he distinguishes between rabbis, philosophers, and kabbalists:

According to the Jews, the rabbis are those who claim to possess knowledge of traditions about the observance and performance of the rites contained in the Law. These [traditions] were preserved orally for a great number of years, from the time of the legislation [at Sinai] until the period of the Emperor Antoninus. Then Rabbi Yehudah, a most famous man of those times, arranged and put them into writing in aphorisms and tractates.<sup>64</sup>

These are those who, by joining human reason with the authority of the divine word, have endeavoured to expound upon Scripture with a harmonious application of both. Among them, we can include two exceedingly famous men who flourished at a time when the Nation still retained some form of liberty.<sup>65</sup>

The third order of Jewish sages is the Kabbalists. The Jews are not obliged to accept their doctrine, although it is received with approval by some members of the Nation, especially in the Levant and Poland.<sup>66</sup>

Consideration XVII is concerned with the question of “The Causes of the Various Permissions granted to the Jews, also mentioning Several Expulsions that befell the Jewish Nation.” Luzzatto puts forth the (very credible) thesis:

I believe that someone who is unable to confront the above-mentioned matters will attempt to argue using the weapons of example and authority. They [will] argue that if the Jews brought

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 46v.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 51v. But see Isaac Abravanel, *Perush ‘al nevi'im aḥaronim* (Commentary on the Latter Prophets) (Tel Aviv, s.d. in Hebrew), 91; Johann Maier, *Kriegsrecht und Friedensordnung in jüdischer Tradition* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000), 403.

<sup>63</sup> Abraham Melamed, “Simone Luzzatto on Tacitus: Apologetica and Ragione Di Stato,” in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, 2:143–70.

<sup>64</sup> *Discourse*, 75v.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 77v.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 80r–v.

so many benefits, why did the most prudent princes and most sagacious republics exclude them from their states, as Spain, France, and England did, and as many cities in Germany as well as not a few in Italy have also done?<sup>67</sup>

The reasons for expulsion, he suggests, can be multiple, including the practice of “usury” and the possession of extensive real estate, but also simply hatred and disdain for the Jewish nation. As a counterbalance to these observations, Luzzatto concludes the *Discourse*, in consideration XVIII, with an overview of the Jewish presence in Europe. The Jews have succeeded in keeping their own essential identity largely intact,<sup>68</sup> because their existence is a manifestation of divine will. Dispersion has made them obedient, and immune to all innovations in rites or dogma:

And although captivity and dispersion are the greatest calamities that can occur to a people and a nation, rendering it vile and abject and exposing it to the contempt and scorn of peoples, it is a most efficacious promoter of endurance and preservation; it removes jealousy and suspicion from the ruling princes and pride and boastfulness from the dispersed people, who consequently become humble and docile.<sup>69</sup>

Luzzatto argues that the total number of Jews in the world is unknown. He names the countries in which Jewish communities exist, particularly praising Turkey for the freedom it allows them in owning land; also mentioned are the Holy Land, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, and the Pontifical State. In conclusion, he states:

This is what it has occurred to me to report in connection with that Nation with regard to the interests of princes and peoples who admit them, and in particular of the Most Serene Republic of Venice, which receives them into its state with such benevolence and protects them with its usual justice and clemency.<sup>70</sup>

The second part of the *Discourse* is, of course, also an apology for Judaism, but of a different character. Whereas the first part was a direct defence against attacks aimed at Judaism – accusations of usury, disruption of social cohesion, or connivance with pirates, etc. – the second takes a more positive stance, focusing on Jewish intellectual history and the benefits the presence of Jews brings to their social surroundings.

## 4 Human Beings and Their “Character”

The literary and supportive strategy of the *Discourse* causes its author to deal, in different instances, with the theme that he cares about the most: the subject of “crime.” Its anthropological implications are described at the beginning of consid-

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 86r.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 89r.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 89r.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 91v.

eration XI, “Referring to the Difficulties in Describing the Customs of the Jews in general, and that their Misdemeanours could easily be Prevented,” where he discusses character:

They say that the great master of civil life, Socrates, brought philosophy, which was wandering high up in the heavens, back into human society and that he opened the cities’ gates to it. After having thoroughly investigated himself and penetrating the most hidden recesses and obscure corners of his soul, he announced that he did not know whether there was but one animal dwelling in his soul or a multiplicity of different animals, wrapped around each other and entangled with themselves. Indeed, he found in himself the virtues, vices, excesses, and moderation – traits that the Stoic doctrine called animals – entwined with one another.<sup>71</sup>

Luzzatto refers to letter CXIII by Seneca *ad Lucilium*, in which he purposely mentions the Stoic doctrine of the multiple or animal soul in human beings, because virtues can only be animal in nature: “*virtutes esse animalia*.”<sup>72</sup> The statement “*virtutes esse animalia*” probably goes back, according to the Stoic fragments, to Chrysippus.<sup>73</sup> Luzzatto wishes to find a philosophical connection to affirm that the human soul is a mixture. He indirectly cites Anaxagoras’s theory of *homoiomeries* (ὁμοιομέρειαι), that is to say of the principles or roots of cosmological anthropological compositions forming a mixture in the body:

It was Anaxagoras who denied the generation of natural things, and he assumed that the world was made out of a jumbled mass that was composed of all things. Thus, he believed that everything was connected and joined to everything. This opinion was deemed absurd. Had he ever suggested something similar of the human soul, his opinion might have been met with greater applause by the sages. For if one were to carefully consider the impulses of the soul, one would witness the appearance of a universal mixture of infinite things.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 35v–36r.

<sup>72</sup> Seneca, *Epistles* XIX:113,3: “The soul, men are agreed, is a living thing, because of itself it can make us living things, and because ‘living things’ have derived their name therefrom. But virtue is nothing else than a soul in a certain condition; therefore it is a living thing. Again, virtue is active, and no action can take place without impulse. And if a thing has impulse, it must be a living thing; for none except a living thing possesses impulse. A reply to this is: ‘If virtue is a living thing, then virtue itself possesses virtue.’ Of course it possesses its own self! Just as the wise man does everything by reason of virtue, so virtue accomplishes everything by reason of itself. ‘In that case,’ say they, ‘all the arts also are living things, and all our thoughts and all that the mind comprehends. It therefore follows that many thousands of living things dwell in man’s tiny heart, and that each individual among us consists of, or at least contains, many living beings.’ Are you gravelled for an answer to this remark? Each of these will be a living thing; but they will not be many separate living things. And why? I shall explain, if you will apply your subtlety and your concentration to my words. Each living thing must have a separate substance; but since all the things mentioned above have a single soul, consequently they can be separate living things but without plurality.”

<sup>73</sup> Hans von Arnim, ed., *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta*, 4 vols. (Leipzig, Teubner, 1903–5; repr., Stuttgart: Teubner, 1964), 1:140, see Thomas G. Rosenmeyer, *Senecan Drama and Stoic Cosmology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 96.

<sup>74</sup> *Discourse*, 36r.

Luzzatto's main objective is not so much talking about the composition of the human personality, but rather to discuss the theme of virtue and vice in human beings. What follows is in fact a long passage on virtues and their contraries as individual characteristics, in different moments and different locations:

The courage to risk one's life often arises from the fear produced by vulgar whispers and murmurs. Fabius could be mentioned as an example of the opposite tendency, for he was half-hearted when attacking Hannibal but brave in scorning the plebs who spat at him. Hence, the covetous desire to prolong life and to enjoy its pleasures by placing weak but durable satisfactions before vehement and brief ones makes us temperate and moderate. Thus Socrates, in Plato's *Phaedo*, unravels the great secret of morality by arguing of the moderates that "*it is a kind of licentiousness that has made them moderate,*" and thus they are "*brave through fear and cowardice*"; similarly, Solomon in Ecclesiastes states in accordance with the Hebrew: "*Again, I considered all labour and all excelling in work, that it is a man's rivalry with his neighbour.*" This means that the vulgar virtues are jealousy, competition, and emulation, which men have towards their neighbours, which leads to a confusion of virtues with vices.

[36v] Pleasure, the main target that is so appealing to our soul, is always mixed with its opposite, pain, as Plato demonstrates in his *Philebus*. Thirst and hunger are the greatest stimuli for our taste. Tragic plays disturb us and lead to our indignation against the tyrants. Nonetheless, we feel a secret itching and hankering for pleasure that greatly tempts and enraptures us. The Jews translate pleasure with the term תענוג, stemming from the verb ענה which means "distressing pain," to denote the aforementioned combination.

Homer praised the impetuous agitation of ire as being full of joy and sweetness. In the same way, jealousy was born from the fervour of love, and from thence hatred. As Tacitus said of Mount Lebanon: "[it] is in fact a marvel, for in the midst of the excessive heat its summit is shaded by trees and covered with snow." Alexander, famed both for his victories and for the virtues of his soul, was so full of pity for Darius and his women, and yet he was so relentless towards Parmenion and Cleitus, who placed the rule of the world in his hands, and so cruel towards Callisthenes, his teacher. Julius Caesar, ferocious and inhuman in Pharsalia, was in contrast merciful towards Marcellus and indulgent towards Brutus, his murderer. Nero, a monster of humanity, at times regretted knowing how to write when he had to write death decrees for delinquents. And yet he did not mind exercising it [i.e. this prerogative] against his mother, and his teacher Seneca. He was a friend of virtue and learning, but he hated these attributes in others. For this reason, Lucan, the wittiest poet that ever lived, lost his life. During the time of the cruel proscription ordered by the Triumvirate, faith, charity, and gratitude took leave of the most eminent and well-composed minds of the Republic, and were to be found in neither fathers nor sons, nor brothers. Then these virtues took refuge in the debasement of slaves and the obscenities of prostitutes. One of these prostitutes suffered the severest tortures, for she did not want to betray her mischievous friends. Socrates found ignorance precisely when his wisdom had reached its peak. Thus, the Oracle acknowledged him to be the wisest man. Gentleness, when a little irritated, becomes indomitable pride, and this, managed with dexterity, changes into gentle and pliable affability.<sup>75</sup>

The careful reader has probably recognised part of the catalogue of the second book of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*: pleasure-pain, rage-meekness, friendship-hatred, fear-courage, shame-shamelessness, compassion-disdain, envy-emulation. This list has a

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 36r–37r.

particular purpose: to reveal the multifaceted dimensions of the human soul. In the words of Luzzatto:

The internal image of our soul is composed of a mosaic that appears to form a single idea. Upon approaching it, however, one sees that it is made up of various fragments of cheap and precious stones put together. In the same way our soul is, for the most part, composed of different and discrepant pieces, each of which on various occasions takes a distinct appearance. Thus, the description of a single man's nature and condition is a very arduous and difficult endeavour. It is even more difficult and arduous to relate all of his actions to a single rule and idea.

Hence, many authors happened to have written about the nature of dogs, horses, and falcons and have discussed their customs and conditions with great exactness. But very few have dealt with man, and when they have, they have done so only fleetingly. The one who has done so better than anyone else is Theophrastus, Aristotle's disciple. He set this undertaking aside for the last years of his life, when he was an octogenarian. He then compiled a historical treatise in which he wrote down his observations regarding aspects of the human soul. Only a fragment of the work exists, the rest having been destroyed by the injuries of time.<sup>76</sup>

Luzzatto is here referring to Theophrastus of Eresos (371–287 BCE), the author of *Characters*, a series of characterisations of the human soul, of which Angelo Ambrogini, nicknamed Poliziano, translated the first fifteen characters into Latin. These characterisations were published in Basel in 1532 by Andreas Cratander without naming Poliziano as a translator,<sup>77</sup> and then published once again, this time with Poliziano's name, in Paris by Frédéric Morel in 1583. Already by 1552, an edition of these works by Aldo Manuzio, with eight further characters added, had appeared thanks to the efforts Giovanni Battista Camozza. In 1599, a second edition of the *Caratteri* was published in Leiden, including five more characters (21–28) discovered by Isaac Casaubon and then copied once more by Marquard Freher. In 1620, Ansaldo Cebà<sup>78</sup> published an Italian version of the first fifteen characters, probably without taking Manuzio's edition into consideration, possibly because, as Romizi believes, he was too young to be aware of it. In any case, he did not utilise the 1552 edition. Cebà's book was however available in Venice, as the old catalogue of the Marciana Library reveals. This publication most likely even circulated in the Venetian ghetto because at that same time, Cebà, a priest, was having an epistolary love affair with the famous Jewish poetess Sara Copio Sullam.<sup>79</sup>

It is now evident that Luzzatto's objective was not to refer to Aristotelian rhetoric or to Theophrastus's composition, but to put the accent on a very popular rhetorical device of that time: the use of typical characters of seventeenth-century thea-

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 37r–v.

<sup>77</sup> I refer the reader to my source for this paragraph, Augusto Romiti, ed., *I caratteri Morali di Teofrasto* (Florence: Sansoni, 1899).

<sup>78</sup> Ansaldo Cebà, *I Characteri morali di Theofrasto interpretati per Ansaldo Cebà. Al Cardinale Federico Borromeo* (Genoa: Pavoni, 1620).

<sup>79</sup> See Veltri, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 226–47.



tre.<sup>80</sup> The representation of the affections of the human soul and of its different characters was a sign of distinction in a century of comedies and tragedies, put on the stage and even sung. In fact, the above-mentioned Cebà published a detailed commentary to accompany Theophrastus's text. An attentive reader will note that emphasising the theatrical character of the human soul also means negating objective responsibility: everyone is an actor on the *theatrum mundi*'s stage and every time he performs a passion or its contrary. How then can one speak of an immutable essence of the human being? Even more so, how can one discuss the essence of an entire ethno-religious community?

## 5 Is It Possible to Characterise a Nation?

The problem of characterising an ethnic group based on secondary characteristics such as skin colour, language, or customs was not born in the nineteenth century with the racist theories of Max Müller and Edward A. Freeman, nor with (pseudo)scientific institutions, such as the Société Ethnologique of Paris, which in 1839 proclaimed the existence of distinctive races to be classified according to their "physical organisation, moral and intellectual character, and historical traditions."<sup>81</sup> The theme of the moral characterisation of an entire nation had already been discussed in the seventeenth century, as one can infer from Luzzatto's text, in which the character of the Jews is considered in relation to their geographical location. In antiquity, this thesis was put forward by Aristotle and became a commonplace in successive periods:

And if it is so difficult to define the interior habits of but one man, how can one proceed when one wishes to determine those of an entire nation? This is especially true for the Jewish Nation, dispersed as it is throughout the world, so that it is impossible to say anything certain and reliable about it. For the Jews are scattered around the whole world like a river running through a long stretch of countryside, whose waters receive an impression from the quality of the various lands through which they pass. This is how the Jews acquire different ways from the nations in which they settle. Therefore, the manners of the Venetian Jews differ substantially from those of Jews in Constantinople, Damascus, and Cagliari, and all of these are different from the Jews of Germany and Poland.<sup>82</sup>

The first argument is clear: the Jewish dispersion in the world caused as a historical consequence the integration of entirely different and anthropologically dissonant

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<sup>80</sup> See Silvia Carandini, *Teatro e spettacolo nel Seicento* (Rome: Laterza, 1990).

<sup>81</sup> Here I am following the article on "racism" by George L. Mosse in *Enciclopedia del Novecento*, Treccani: available online at [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/razzismo\\_%28Enciclopedia-Novecento%29/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/razzismo_%28Enciclopedia-Novecento%29/) (last accessed October 2011).

<sup>82</sup> *Discourse*, 37v.

elements, so that a generalising and, as we would say today, globalising conclusion is impossible. On the contrary, our author comments:

Nonetheless, should someone still wish to investigate the universal habits [they share], one could say that they are a Nation of a fainthearted, cowardly, and half-hearted spirit, incapable in their present situation of any political government, preoccupied with their particular interests, quite – if not completely – unaware of their universal ones.<sup>83</sup>

This is a fundamental element, as here Luzzatto is utilising a classical argument in Judaism: the lack of political strength. Luzzatto is indirectly referring to Nicholas of Cusa, who in his *De Pace Fidei* wrote: “The resistance of the Jews does not nevertheless prevent harmony, because they exist in such a small number and would not be capable of perturbing the entire world only because of military might.”<sup>84</sup> Before Luzzatto, Shlomo Ibn Verga expressed a similar view in his *Shevet Yehudah*, the *Scepter of Judah*, printed in Adrianople (Edirne), Turkey in 1550. A fundamental theme of Ibn Verga’s work is the expulsion of the Jews from the Spanish kingdoms. The logic of the work is similar to that of the works on the birth and fall of empires by Polybius and Machiavelli; this would seem even more disconcerting in the case of the Jews because their fall was precipitated by internal conflicts, as the historian of antiquity Josephus affirmed. The trust that the Jews put in God brought them to neglect the art of war, and the fall caused by their sins rendered them helpless and vulnerable; it made them “naked twice” (in the words of Yitzhak Baer), without God’s help because they sinned against him, and without weapons because they were incapable of bearing arms. In this way, Ibn Verga brings us back to the Jewish people’s inability to defend themselves, which Judaism interpreted as the myopic choice of betting everything on faith rather than also considering military power. The fall caused by sin could not be counterbalanced by mastering the art of war. We are dealing here with the Machiavellian argument which gave “the naked prophet” a body:

It is necessary, then, in order to give a good account of this matter, to investigate whether these innovators stand by their own strength or whether they depend on others, that is, if in carrying on their work they need to entreat or if they are strong enough to compel. In the first case, they always have a hard time and accomplish nothing, but when they depend on their own resources and are strong enough to compel, then they are seldom in danger. This is the reason why all armed prophets win, and unarmed ones fall. Because, in addition to what has been said, the people are by nature variable; to convince them of a thing is easy; to hold them to that conviction is hard. Therefore a prophet must be ready, when they no longer believe, to

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 37v–38r.

<sup>84</sup> “Haec tamen Iudaeorum resistentia non impedit concordiam. Pauci enim sunt et turbare universum mundum armis non poterunt”; Nicholas De Cusa, *De Pace Fidei*, ed. Raymund Kilibansky and Hildebrand Bascour (Hamburg: Meiner, 1959), 39. See also Jasper Hopkins, trans. and ed., *Nicholas of Cusa’s De Pace Fidei and Cribatio Alkorani: Translation and Analysis* (Minneapolis: Arthur J. Banning Press, 1994).

make them believe by force. Moses, Cyrus, Theseus, and Romulus could not have gained long continued observance for their constitutions if they had been unarmed. In our times Fra Girolamo Savonarola was unarmed; hence he was destroyed amid his institutions when they were still new, as soon as the multitude ceased to believe him, because he had no way to keep firm those who had once believed or to make the unbelieving believe.

Therefore such able men as I have mentioned have great difficulty as they go forward, for all their dangers are along the road and by their own might they must overcome them. But after they have overcome them and when they are revered, having wiped out those who envy them their lofty position, they are powerful, firm, honored, prosperous.<sup>85</sup>

Even though one cannot twist the sense of Luzzatto's treatise, it is nevertheless clear how Machiavelli's theory is used in a negative sense: the unarmed prophet remains the same and does not create obstacles to the prince's policy, because the Jewish people are entirely devoted to him. This attitude is in fact considered emblematic of the Venetian Diaspora when Luzzatto states:

The Jews, however, were always willing to obey public commands with swift compliance, for they are dispersed and scattered all over the world and deprived of any source of protection, so that when particular taxes were imposed on them, they never dared to utter or formulate so much as a simple complaint.<sup>86</sup>

In this argument, the Venetian rabbi is probably following Jean Bodin, who in his *République* (1576) saw the foundation of the principle of sovereignty in a citizen's unconditional obedience.

Therefore, if conspiracy could be considered an ordinary crime, it still remains non-existent because the Jewish people are inclined to obedience. As a consequence, it is only possible to talk about the individual responsibility of one or more individuals. Luzzatto emphasises this point probably because these individuals belong to the body of society, a essentially healthy body.

## 6 Individual Responsibility and Collective Punishment

This is the focal point of Luzzatto's argument: if a crime has been committed, a remedy is necessary, as it would be in the case of the human body. The prince must act to try and cure it of its illnesses. However, some illnesses can be cured, while others are contagious and demand that the ill person be separated from the rest of the community:

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<sup>85</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 26–27.

<sup>86</sup> *Discourse*, 22r.

The vices of the soul are similar to the infirmity of our body, which can be divided into two types. Some of them, despite being extremely serious and pernicious, can be overcome by the doctor alone with ordinary purges and draining; others are of a more vicious quality, and are contagious and communicative in nature. In such cases, it behoves the prince to sanction them with arrest and expulsion from the state, to which he can also add the terror of torture to death.<sup>87</sup>

And on the theft discussed above, our author continues: “Of this nature were the majority of the crimes committed by some members of the Nation, as they were always motivated by greed or lucre, or similar wickedness.”<sup>88</sup>

A collective punishment, continues Luzzatto, would be justified in the case of people who have organised a conspiracy together or in the case of treason by an entire population, for example by changing religion, invading cities, or preparing a revolution. He cites the biblical examples of the adoration of the golden calf and the mutiny of Korah, when the entire population had to suffer penance.

Be it in the case of the worship of the calf or that of Korah’s mutiny against Moses, these are examples in which God wished to punish the entire nation although not every person had actually committed the offence. He desired to do so because of the disposition of the people, who were all inclined towards such excesses and prone to being carried away by them. Such tendencies had never occurred with other sins, where God distinguished among the delinquencies and errors that befell some individuals of the population. In the aforementioned cases, the ordinary remedies that subordinate magistrates administered were not sufficient; it is thus sometimes necessary for the supreme prince to intervene with the legitimate power of his title and his supreme authority. He must procure the extermination of the evil with multiple executions, or at least with collective exile.<sup>89</sup>

From a historical point of view, Luzzatto’s argumentation does not contain any case justifying total destruction, even in the case of the famous expulsion from the kingdoms of the Spanish crown:

Nowadays it would be an unpersuasive [argument] for the king of Spain to decide to rigorously expel all Granadans, a people so numerous and full of farmers and other artisans, because of some act of larceny, assassination, or any other offence committed by 15 or 20 of these people. It is unlikely that he would follow that resolution so detrimental to his kingdom and so surprising for the whole world as a response to such trifling crimes. Yet the secret reasons for such a severe decree were surely justified because he uncovered a secret conspiracy that was about to pervade the entire Granadan Nation. Therefore, it might well deserve slaughter instead of exile. There is no doubt that condemning the many for the crime of the one is against natural law and the teaching of divine law.<sup>90</sup>

And he continues:

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**87** Ibid., 38v.

**88** Ibid., 39r.

**89** Ibid., 39r–v.

**90** *Discourse*, 39v–40r.

One finds nothing in this world of such great perfection that some evil is not attached or added to it by malicious abuse. Iron, such a necessary [material], used to make a great variety of instruments essential to human life, is very often the means of murders and destruction. Speech, which lends so much nobility to our species, is often the cause of misfortune and ruin. Despite this, there has never been a legislator so scrupulous that he prohibited the excavation and extraction of iron from the mines, or forbade men to speak. In the documents of the Holy Scripture, we find that when the crimes committed by the inhabitants of Pentapolis had reached the highest point of viciousness and magnitude, it pleased God that the innocence of ten men was able to make up for the punishments that so great a number of the people deserved. In conclusion, there is but a small chance that a few delinquents of a nation are sufficient to provoke public indignation against the whole nation.<sup>91</sup>

The text is easy to understand even for a modern reader. Even though iron produces death and massacres, and words cause misfortunes and ruin, good governments do not prohibit either one of them. It is not a coincidence that Luzzatto associates words with swords; he is indirectly referring to the biblical description of the sharp cutting nature of the tongue, which can wound even more than iron. At this point, the author's apologetic intention about himself becomes apparent. By being indirectly critical of the authorities, Luzzatto recognises that they do not forbid "reasoning" and therefore praises their tolerance.

## 7 The Fortune of the *Discourse*

The *Discourse* enjoyed a remarkable success only a few years after its publication and was partially or completely translated into several languages such as Latin, French,<sup>92</sup> English, and Hebrew. Sometimes, it was also used as a source for biographical and bibliographical data about some Jewish philosophers.<sup>93</sup>

Only three years after the publication of the *Discourse*, Melchiorre Palontrotti directly responded to it with a pamphlet entitled "A Brief Answer to Simone Luzzatto."<sup>94</sup> In Venice, the *Discourse* was almost immediately acknowledged as a modern text with relevant political implications. In fact, its first political usage dates back

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 40r.

<sup>92</sup> A first Latin translation of excerpts from the *Discourse* was made by Joannes Christophorus Wolfius in his renowned *Bibliotheca* (1727). Jacques Basnage translated excerpts from consideration XVIII into French. Consideration XIII was partially translated into Hebrew by Isaac Reggio in 1834 (see bibliography).

<sup>93</sup> Namely for Gersonides and Crescas, by the Orientalist Giovanni Bernardo De Rossi (1742–1831). See Giovanni Bernardo De Rossi, *Dizionario storico degli autori ebrei e delle lor opera* (Parma: Dalla Reale Stamperia, 1802), 1:127, where he also remarks that the book was very rare, and says that in his *Discourse* Luzzatto refuted Farissol's theories about the ten tribes and the river Sambatyon (ibid., 117).

<sup>94</sup> Melchiorre Palontrotti, *Breve Risposta a Simone Luzzato* (Rome: s.l., 1641). On Luzzatto and Palontrotti, see Ravid, "Contra Judaeos."

to approximately 1659/60, when a member of the Venetian Loredan family whose Christian name remains unknown used the *Discourse* to write his own apology for the Venetian Jewish community in order to protect it from the risk of expulsion in those very same years. His speech was very recently retrieved from the Venetian archives and provides proof that Luzzatto's relevance as a political thinker was acknowledged very early.<sup>95</sup>

Luzzatto's ideas and arguments continued to influence both Jewish and Christian authors. Menasseh ben Israel tacitly adopted Luzzatto's arguments in his *De fidelitate et utilitate Judaicae gentis libellus anglicus*. The deist John Toland read the book, and, impressed, planned a translation of it into English. Most probably through the intermediary of Toland's works, and through Menasseh's unattributed citations,<sup>96</sup> the indirect influence of the *Discourse* can be recognised in Moses Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem*.<sup>97</sup> It is directly referenced by Johann Friedrich Herder in his *Adrastea*.<sup>98</sup>

Many of the ideas expressed by Luzzatto reappear somewhat later, in another context and discussion:<sup>99</sup> the place of the Jews in economic history, as seen by German scholars in the twentieth century.<sup>100</sup> As Toni Oelsner puts it:

The idea that the Jews are the commercial people *par excellence*, that they fulfilled a particular function in the economic development of the Western world, has its long history, and it is by no means of German origin. But it was left to three German economists, Wilhelm Roscher (1817–1894), Werner Sombart (1863–1941), and Max Weber (1864–1920), to raise this idea, intertwined with legends and stereotypes, to the level of a scientific theory.<sup>101</sup>

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**95** See Giuseppe Veltri and Gianfranco Miletto, "...Per esser buon Catolico Cristian, è necessario esser perfettamente Ebreo." Difesa inedita del senatore veneziano Loredan in favore degli ebrei nel 1659/60, basata sul Discorso di Simone Luzzatto," *Henoch* 36, no. 2 (2014): 307–27; reprinted in Veltri, ed., *Filosofo e Rabbino*, 249–74.

**96** Isaac Barzilay, "John Toland's Borrowings"; Ravid, "How Profitable the Nation of the Jewes Are"; Paolo Bernardini, "Motivi, fonti, struttura delle *Reasons*," in John Toland, *Ragioni per naturalizzare gli ebrei in Gran Bretagna e Irlanda (1714)*, trans. and ed. Paolo Bernardini and Laura Orsi (Florence: La Giuntina, 1998), especially 79–84.

**97** Alexander Altmann cites Luzzatto's work and notes in his introduction to *Jerusalem*: "Es wäre reizvoll, die von Mendelssohn angeführten Argumente für die 'Nützlichkeit' der Juden mit denen Luzzattos, Manassehs und Tolands im einzelnen zu vergleichen. Was schon bei einer flüchtigen Gegenüberstellung ins Auge fällt, ist der neue Zugang zur Frage, den Mendelssohn in der populistischen Theorie findet. Diese Lehre, die in seiner Zeit viel Anklang fand, sieht in der Bevölkerungszunahme das wesentliche Gut und den Reichtum des Staates, und Mendelssohn macht sich diesen Gesichtspunkt völlig zu eigen." In Moses Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften. Jubiläumsausgabe*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1983), 8:xviii.

**98** Johann Gottfried Herder, *Werke*, ed. Günter Arnold, vol. 10, *Adrastea (Auswahl)* (Frankfurt a. M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2000).

**99** On this aspect, see Karp, *Politics*.

**100** This is also the subject dealt with by Toni Oelsner, "The Place of the Jews in Economic History as Viewed by German Scholars," *The Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 7 (1962): 183–212.

**101** *Ibid.*, 183.

Werner Sombart<sup>102</sup> maintained that “the Jew was naturally gifted for trade. Thus from a mercantilistic point of view it was concluded that the Jew’s respected position in society is assured when and wherever commercial enterprise gains prestige (Sombart) or when his services are needed (Roscher).”<sup>103</sup>

Before World War II, the *Discourse* was analysed by the historian Yitzhak Baer (1888–1980) in his book *Galut*, published by Schocken in Berlin in 1936.<sup>104</sup> There, he discusses the topics of the Diaspora and the Land of Israel from the historical point of view of life in the Diaspora from antiquity up to the emergence of the purported Messiah Shabtai Zvi. As Baer notes, the study of the condition of Judaism would be relegated to Christian treatises from the seventeenth century on with only two exceptions: the above-mentioned *The Sceptre of Judah* and the *Discourse*.<sup>105</sup> In Baer’s book, Luzzatto’s thought acquires a relevant role in explaining and interpreting the Diaspora as a conception of exile in a political and economic frame of reference.<sup>106</sup> Baer gives him the credit for having dealt with the Diaspora in connection with economic models going beyond Abrabanel’s fragmented remarks. He notes that Luzzatto conceived theories which could still be held valid in his own time, even though, he admits, the components which gave a unique meaning to his ideas are neglected. He emphasises the innovative features of the theory of the usefulness of the Jews as a tool to implement the market economy. The lack of any territorial possession and of a political haven where they could safely take their earnings are essential components of his political innovations. Baer vigorously stresses Luzzatto’s idea that specific Jewish know-how in mercantile and commercial affairs is the result of their own history: “The Galut made the Jews a commercial people.”<sup>107</sup>

A further component that Baer expressly emphasises is the separation of political and religious life. In his interpretation, Luzzatto would have followed Ibn Verga’s example by highlighting the main national features of the Jews and therefore becoming a prototypical paradigm of Zionism, since after him a national description of the Jews can only be found in contemporary Russian literature. Perhaps this interpretation is one of the reasons why the real interest in the book came about after the war, in 1947, when Baer’s book was published in English translation and in the

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**102** Werner Sombart, “Der Anteil der Juden am Aufbau der modernen Volkswirtschaft,” *Neue Rundschau* 21 (1910): 145–73; id., *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1911).

**103** Oelsner, “Place,” 185. Wilhelm Roscher, “Die Stellung der Juden im Mittelalter, betrachtet vom Standpunkt der allgemeinen Handelspolitik,” *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft* 31 (1875): 503–26.

**104** Yitzhak F. Baer, *Galut* (Schocken: Berlin, 1936); Hebrew translation, *Galut*, trans. Israel Eldad (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1980); French translation, *Galout. L’imaginaire de l’exil dans le Judaïsme*, trans. Marc de Launay (Paris: Calman-Lévy, 2000).

**105** For an extended comparison of the two works, see Veltri, “Identity of Essentiality,” 5–7.

**106** Baer, *Galut*, 83–92.

**107** Ibid., 84.

wake of a revival of Jewish interest in Luzzatto's political and economic ideas. In that year, the Italian economist Riccardo Bachi published an article giving a comparison between the doctrine of the city in Giovanni Botero and Simone Luzzatto.<sup>108</sup> Yet the real revival took place in the USA, and the fact that it followed the decimation of Jewish life in Europe and the simultaneous attempts to establish an independent (Jewish) state in Palestine is not a coincidence. Confronted with the question of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, American Jewry reacted with a memorandum to President Truman in which they proposed the establishment of a secular democratic state in Palestine to which immigration would be numerically limited, but open to all, with no preference given on the basis of religion. It was Luzzatto who provided the clearest arguments for a Jewish political existence not based on religious beliefs, both in the Diaspora and in a "neutral" state of Palestine where Jews would have the same rights as in the Diaspora.

Also in 1947, the Jewish magazine *Commentary* decided to publish excerpts from the work of "A Jewish Apologist of 17th Century Venice," translated by Felix Giovanelli.<sup>109</sup> In the introductory remarks to these excerpts, it is noted that Luzzatto's work "represents one of the first attempts, if not the very first, to frame Jewish apologetics in other than theological dimensions."<sup>110</sup> The editors understood the true novelty of Luzzatto's approach,<sup>111</sup> characterising him as "the first, Jew or Gentile, to take a cool and sober look at the position of the Jews in Europe and draw up a balance sheet of assets and liabilities in social, economic, and political terms."<sup>112</sup> The enthusiasm of the editors is unmistakable: "Luzzatto's rationalism in that early day," they point out, "emboldened him to arguments whose unabashed 'materialism' would shock present-day rabbis."<sup>113</sup> The decision to translate Luzzatto into English followed an assessment of his role in Jewish political thought as discussed in Baer's *Galut*. Also in 1947, at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Lester Walter Roubey submitted an English translation of the tractate (excluding consideration XV) as his rabbinical thesis.<sup>114</sup>

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**108** Riccardo Bachi, "La dottrina sulla dinamica."

**109** Giovanelli, Felix, trans. and ed. "The Situation of the Hebrews – A Jewish Apologist of 17th Century Venice – Simone Luzzatto – Consideration XI." *Commentary* 4 (April 1947): 372–77; id., trans. and ed. "The Hebrews among the Nations – A 17th Century Venetian Jew Explains His People – Simone Luzzatto – Considerations XVII and XVIII." *Commentary* 5 (May 1947): 474–78; id., trans. and ed. "Learning among the Hebrews – A 17th Century Report – Simone ben Isaac Luzzatto – Consideration XVI," *Commentary* 6 (June 1952): 589–93; Roubey, "'Discorso circa il stato degli Hebrei.'"

**110** Introduction by the editors in Felix Giovanelli, trans and ed., "The Situation of the Hebrews," 371.

**111** Irving Kristol was managing editor of the magazine from 1947 to 1952.

**112** Giovanelli, "The Situation of the Hebrews."

**113** Ibid.

**114** In the same year, he was appointed rabbi of the congregation of Sha'are shommayim at Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where he served from 1947 to 1952.



Finally, in 1950–51, a complete Hebrew translation was produced by Dante Lattes with an introduction by Moshe A. Shulvass and an essay by Riccardo Bachi,<sup>115</sup> who dealt more extensively with Luzzatto in his book *Israele disperso e ricostruito. Pagine di storia e di economia*, published in 1952.<sup>116</sup> The book was written with the clear purpose of demonstrating his interest in Jewish tradition and economy and its author almost passionately commits himself to an in-depth analysis of Luzzatto's treatise.

Leaving aside an in-depth examination of Bachi's treatment of Luzzatto, which I have already discussed elsewhere,<sup>117</sup> I will point out that it is in the last chapter of his book that Bachi displays all his talent as an economist and as a historian of economy. In not less than fifteen pages, he explains the principles of the Jewish economy according to Luzzatto's *Discourse*, whose new topic is the economic dimension of the Diaspora. Bachi highlights Luzzatto's innovations in pointing out the Jewish skill in trade, stemming from necessity, i.e. from the lack of any other chance in the Diaspora. The Jews, although divided into thousands of communities, do possess elements of cohesion. Since they cannot have stable reference points, they live at their own risk, without their own homeland and without work, giving the impression, as Bachi puts it, of having an "inclination towards liquid assets," a phrase borrowed from John Maynard Keynes. What makes Luzzatto's analysis of commerce and the Jewish input in the Venetian economy admirable, Bachi states, is the fact that Luzzatto did not assume certain economic theories or generalised analyses as a starting point. On the contrary, with a more correct and ground-breaking methodology, he depended on numerical data.<sup>118</sup>

Indeed, Luzzatto is among the first to use statistics in order to appraise the phenomenon of the taxation that Jews, citizens, and foreigners were required to pay. However, Bachi remarks that the *Discourse* does not outline a "real description of the financial relationships of Jewish population with the Venetian state, and does not assume that a financial survey of the Venetian Jewish community could be of any interest at all."<sup>119</sup>

Though both Zionists, Yitzhak Baer and Riccardo Bachi gave different interpretations of Jewish history and identity, although they both took the potential as a starting point and not the messianic suffering. In Baer's opinion, Luzzatto merits some attention because he shifts the perspective onto the economic life of the Jews. Bachi has a different standpoint, appealing to the force of economy, of the Jewish contribution to history, and to statistics and sociology. Bachi is much more focused on the consciousness of the modern Diaspora, which, although it considers the issue of territory and the Land of Israel a central point, it is also able to foresee the

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<sup>115</sup> Lattes, *Ma'amar*.

<sup>116</sup> Riccardo Bachi, *Israele disperso e ricostruito. Pagine di storia e di economia* (Rome: La Rassegna Mensile d'Israele, 1952).

<sup>117</sup> See Veltri, "Identity of Essentiality," 9–12.

<sup>118</sup> Bachi, *Israele disperso*, 122.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

possibility of a vindication of the contemporary Diaspora. This is not true for Baer, since he sees the meaning of the Diaspora in resistance, at least until the coming of the Messiah.

## 8 A *Status Quaestionis* of the Research on the *Discourse*

The above-mentioned interest notwithstanding, Luzzatto's scepticism has remained unnoticed by readers and modern scholarship for some time. It was brought to light again by some scholars in the nineteenth century, allegedly by Heinrich Graetz and apologetically by Shmuel David Luzzatto,<sup>120</sup> who attempted to justify it somewhat, since he considered it a weak spot.<sup>121</sup> In any case, it is important to point out that the discussions and evaluations of Luzzatto's scepticism focus mainly on the *Socrates*.<sup>122</sup> Giuseppe Veltri has stated without further discussion that the *Discourse* is replete with sceptical ideas. Yet immediately afterwards, he pointed out that the *Socrates* is the best display of Luzzatto's scepticism.<sup>123</sup>

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**120** Who was in possession of both works. See Joseph Luzzatto, *Catalogue de la Bibliothèque de la Littérature Hébraïque et Orientale de feu Mr. Samuel David Luzzatto de Trieste Professeur au Collège Rabbiniqne de Padoue* (Padua, 1868), 6:55–56.

**121** I say “allegedly” by Graetz because he writes as follows: “Halb und halb kann man auch Simone (Simcha) Luzzatto...zu den Wühlern dieser Zeit rechnen.” Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden von den Ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart*, vol. 10, *Von der dauernden Ansiedelung der Marranen in Holland (1618) bis zum Beginne der mendelssohnschen Zeit (1750)* (Berlin: Arani, 1998), 149. Ravid follows the official English translation and understands the word “Wühler” as “sceptic.” See Ravid, *Economics*, 94 n. 97, while the official French translation renders it as “esprits novateurs.” Heinrich Graetz, *Histoire des Juifs*, vol. 5, “De l’époque de la réforme (1550) à 1880,” trans. Moïse Bloch (Paris: Librairie Durlacher, 1897), 182. As for ShaDaL, he writes apologetically as follows: “Era il secolo di Cartesio. L’autorità di Aristotile era scossa: la Scolastica che si era tanto adoperata a conciliare la filosofia colla teologia era caduta in dispregio; i sistemi degli antichi filosofi greci tornarono in voga, e le più salutari credenze minacciarono di smarrirsi. Il nostro Simone Luzzatto, filosofo molto erudito e nello stesso tempo uomo religioso, credette giovevole alla fede e insieme utile per la società il porre in piena luce l’incertezza delle umane speculazioni, non già per condurre gli uomini allo scetticismo, ma per umiliare la temerità dei falsi filosofi, e porgere ai credenti le armi contro i loro attacchi.” Luzzatto, *Autobiografia*, 16.

**122** See David B. Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 153–84; Ariel Viterbo, “Socrate nel Ghetto: lo scetticismo mascherato di Simone Luzzatto,” *Studi veneziani* 38 (1999): 79–128; id., “La mitswa di studiare le scienze nell’opera di Rav Simchàh (Simone) Luzzatto,” in *Segulat Israel* 4 (1997): 54–67; Giuseppe Veltri, “Principles of Jewish Skeptical Thought. The Case of Judah Moscato and Simone Luzzatto,” in *Rabbi Judah Moscato and the Jewish Intellectual World of Mantua in the 16th–17th Centuries*, ed. Giuseppe Veltri and Gianfranco Miletto (Leiden: Brill 2012), 15–36.

**123** Veltri, “Principles,” 15–36, 27 n. 53.

Traditionally, the evaluation of Luzzatto has essentially been based on the *Discourse*.<sup>124</sup> He was labelled a “sottile illustratore delle vicende economiche del ghetto veneziano”<sup>125</sup> by Attilio Milano and as a defence attorney for the Venetian Jews by Benjamin Ravid.<sup>126</sup> The latter’s suggestion has been widely followed and the *Discourse* has been considered as belonging to the apologetic genre so recurrent at that time.<sup>127</sup> This approach has somehow undermined its political and philosophical evaluation to such an extent that Luzzatto’s plea for tolerance has several times been considered as conservative with an acquiescent side, seeking no innovation or improvement in the status of the Jews.<sup>128</sup> Recently, the *Socrates* has been also read as a conservative work.<sup>129</sup>

However, the *Discourse* has also been evaluated from the point of view of the history of Jewish economy, and it has been considered the first specimen of a theoretical literature on Jewish political economy.<sup>130</sup> Finally, the latest approaches to the text have enhanced its interpretation from the point of view of the history of ideas in order to retrace its ancient and modern sources and Luzzatto’s idea of the Jewish people.<sup>131</sup>

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**124** Although it is worth noting that Heinrich Graetz began his discussion about Luzzatto with the *Socrates* and not with the *Discourse*, and his positive evaluation of Luzzatto’s sound knowledge first stems from a survey of the *Socrates*. See Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 10:149–54.

**125** Attilio Milano, *Storia degli ebrei in Italia* (Torino: Einaudi, 1963), 312.

**126** Ravid, *Economics*, 5.

**127** See *ibid.*, 25–38. Ravid focused on Luzzatto’s defense of the Jewish commerce in the first ten considerations he analysed in the light of the history of the merchants and the charter system.

**128** According to Barzilay, Luzzatto shrewdly used the argument of Jewish economic usefulness as well as that of their political passiveness and acquiescent acceptance of their role as merchants and eventually usurers (Isaac Barzilay, “The Italian and Berlin Haskalah,” 36–37). Ravid’s judgments are in the same vein (“the *Discorso* was basically a conservative work. Luzzatto sought no innovation,” Ravid, *Economics*, 98), as are those of Jonathan Karp, *Politics*, 26.

**129** Paolo L. Bernardini, “Lo scetticismo del rabbino: rileggendo Simone Luzzatto,” *Henoch* 2 (2015): 296–98.

**130** Karp, *Politics*, 21.

**131** Veltri’s essays about Luzzatto have recently been collected in Veltri, *Filosofo e rabbino*. However, see also Veltri, *Renaissance Philosophy*, chapter 9, “The City and the Ghetto: Simone Luzzatto and the Development of Jewish Political Thought,” 195–225; *id.*, “Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der jüdischen Existenz in der Diaspora: Streiflichter auf Simone Luzzatto und den Mythos von Venedig,” in *Judentum und Christentum zwischen Konfrontation und Faszination: Ansätze zu einer neuen Beschreibung der jüdisch-christlichen Beziehungen*, ed. Wolfram Kinzig and Cornelia Kückl. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 2002), 97–115; *id.*, “... in einigen Glaubenartikeln”; *id.*, “Alcune considerazioni sugli Ebrei e Venezia nel pensiero politico di Simone Luzzatto,” in *Percorsi di storia ebraica. Fonti per la storia degli ebrei in Italia nell’età moderna e contemporanea*, ed. Pier Cesare Ioly-Zorattini (Udine: Forum, 2005), 247–66; *id.*, “Geborgte Identität im Zerrspiegel. ‘Jüdische Riten’ aus philosophisch-politischer Perspektive,” *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 32 (2005): 111–30; Abraham Melamed, “Simone Luzzatto on Tacitus: Apologetica and Ragione di Stato,” in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, ed. Isadore Twersky, 2 vols. (Cambridge Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 2:143–70; Vasileios Syros, “Simone Luzzatto’s Image of the Ideal Prince and the Italian

The contribution of the editors of this volume will essentially aim at refreshing the approach to the *Discourse* by highlighting and analysing its sceptical background and implications, especially as far as it involves the realm of politics and fashions a sceptical political appraisal of the Jewish people.

## 9 Conclusion

While bringing this introduction to an end, it will perhaps be worthwhile to explain why Luzzatto's thought and works are so relevant in the context of the Jewish culture of seventeenth-century Italy.

It is precisely his philosophical and political scepticism that makes Luzzatto's texts so unique. This edition aims to grant access to his works and thought to English-speaking readers and scholars. By approaching his texts from this point of view, I hope to open a new path in research into Jewish culture and philosophy that will enable other scholars to develop new directions and new perspectives, stressing the interpenetration between Jews and the surrounding Christian and secular cultures.

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Tradition of Reason of State," *Redescriptions. Yearbook of Political Thought and Conceptual History* 9 (2005): 157–82; Giuliano Tamani, "Lontano dal Canal Grande: ebrei e Venezia nell'età del ghetto," *Annali di Ca' Foscari*, 46, no. 2 (2007): 139–73; Ariella Lang, "The Double Edge of Irony in Simone Luzzatto's *Discorso*," in *Jewish Social Studies* 15, no. 3 (Spring/Summer 2009): 114–33; Cristiana Facchini, "The City, the Ghetto and Two Books: Venice and Jewish Early Modernity," *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History* 2 (October 2011): 11–44.



Anna Lissa

# Jews on Trial and Their Sceptical Attorney: Philosophic Scepticism and Political Thought in Simone Luzzatto's Italian Works

Therefore, deprived of any biased emotion, I am going to express my own advice about the way to judge Socrates. I hold it sensible that we have to judge him by adopting the very same method he adopts in judging the things he happens to be met with. He suspends his own judgment and we are going to suspend our judgment about him too. Nor will we come to a peremptory decision *pro nunc*. Thus, we will suspend the final verdict until some clearer evidence becomes available to us allowing us either to absolve him or to sentence him.<sup>1</sup>

Luzzatto, who was seated at the head as judge in the contest, suddenly banged both hands on the table and said: "The verse that is being disputed, as you know, has left all the most excellent rabbis perplexed and bewildered in such a manner that they do not know whether they are in heaven or on earth." And after some more similar words he placed his finger on his mouth and added: "Let us kindly be silent and close our books, because if we continue to speculate on this prophecy of Daniel, it will come to pass that we will all become Christians. It cannot be denied that there is clearly shown that the messiah, whose time is already passed, has come. Whether this is Jesus of Nazareth, I do not wish to decide hastily."<sup>2</sup>

The juxtaposition of Luzzatto's original quotation taken from the conclusion of his philosophical dialogue entitled *Socrates or on Human Knowledge* (1651) and a pas-

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1 Luzzatto, *Socrates*, 399 (all the passages taken from the *Socrates* are translated by me).

2 Morosini, *Via della fede* (Roma: Nella Stamparia della Sacra Congregazione De Propaganda Fide, 1683), "A' i dispersi Figliuoli d'Israele della presente Cattività" s.p.: "Il Luzzatto, che sedeva nel primo luogo, come Giudice del contrasto, battendo improvvisamente ambe le mani sulla tavola, disse: *Il Testo, che si disputa, fa stare, come sapete, tutti i più eccellenti Rabbini perplessi, e sbalorditi in maniera, che non sanno, se siano in Cielo, ò in terra.* E dopo alcune altre parole simili postosi il dito alla bocca, soggiunse: *Taciamo di gratia, e chiudiamo i libri, perché se staremo più a specolare su questa profetia di Daniele, converrà, che tutti ci facciamo Christiani. Non può negarsi, che in essa non si mostri chiaramente esser venuto il Messia, di cui il tempo è già passato. Se questo sia Giesù Nazareno, io non voglio precipitare il mio sentimento.*" English translation available in Ravid, "Contra Judaeos," 333. For a more recent evaluation of Morosini and his work, see Michela Andreatta, "Raccontare per persuadere," and annexed bibliography.

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**Note:** This essay was conceived and for the greater part written during the year 2015–16 while I was a research associate at the Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies – Jewish Scepticism at Hamburg University. My special thanks go first to Professor Giuseppe Veltri, director of the Centre, for his guiding hand and friendly advice, and to all the colleagues and fellows of the Centre, who discussed aspects and passages of the *Discourse* with me, always providing clever insights and inspiration.

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sage extracted from Giulio Morosini's *Via della fede* (1683) may sound like a provocation, especially if one takes into account the fact that this specific passage is suggesting an alleged conversion of Luzzatto to Christianity that previous scholars have already exposed as false.<sup>3</sup> However, I suggest reading and comparing both passages from a different point of view. In fact, they both deal with the final verdict of a process involving a judgment based on available evidence and arguments. In the new version of Socrates's trial elaborated by Luzzatto, the final verdict concerning the philosopher is suspended according to the sceptical procedure of the suspension of judgment (*epochē*). Luzzatto's final verdict as transmitted by Morosini concerns a controversy between two brothers, both of whom were Jews who had been previously forced to convert to Catholicism. The first wanted to return to Judaism, and the second wanted to keep his brother in the Christian religion. Thus, they organised a dispute in Venice about the interpretation of Daniel's messianic prophecy. Simone Luzzatto was called to act as a judge since, as Morosini himself puts it, he was a rabbi and enjoyed "the highest reputation for his Jewish knowledge and he was also held in the greatest esteem among the Christians for his education and eloquence."<sup>4</sup>

Beyond the above-mentioned issue of conversion, scholars are still discussing the authenticity of the episode. Some argue that Morosini was not reliable and that he invented the whole story; others are more inclined to think that the incident is authentic while casting doubt on the meaning of Luzzatto's detailed words.<sup>5</sup> A comparison of this passage with the one taken from the *Socrates* may suggest that Luzzatto did actually say these words, but intended to say something very different from what Morosini wanted to put in his mouth.

Socrates has been put on trial with the accusation of having tried to unsettle the foundations of the whole of human knowledge, and after examining the various philosophical theories on knowledge, he opts for a suspension of judgment, i.e. he opts for a sceptical attitude that acknowledges the lack of a well-founded knowledge. At the end of his long speech in his defence, the jury is bewildered by Socrates's arguments and divided as to how to judge him. In fact, there are some, like Alcmaeon, who would opt for convicting him, while others agree with Plato, who stood up in front of the jury and suggested absolving Socrates by adopting towards him the same suspension of judgement for which he had pleaded. In fact, Plato argues, the evidence both in his favour and against him is incomplete and does not enable the jury to express a final judgement. Thus, the suspension of judgement implies a silent attitude and at the same time an open-ended stance awaiting further

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<sup>3</sup> For an overview of the debate, see Ravid, "Contra Judaeos," 333–34 n. 67. Recently, the episode has been interpreted by Ariella Lang as proof of the intermediary role that Luzzatto played between the Jewish and Christian communities. See Ariella Lang, "Double Edge of Irony."

<sup>4</sup> Morosini, *Via della fede*, Introduzione.

<sup>5</sup> See Ravid, "Contra Judaeos," 333–34 n. 67.

and clearer evidence. Although the need for clear evidence to establish the truth recalls the Cartesian stance that gives in to radical doubt only in order to overcome it, Luzzatto remains here in the grip of a doubt that is much nearer to Montaigne's perplexed reason that never ceases its investigation.

In Morosini's lines, Luzzatto's final verdict marks the end of the above-mentioned dispute with a suspension of judgment expressed by a gesture – “he placed his finger on his mouth” – and by the words “I do not wish to decide hastily.” In a certain sense, it is possible to suggest that Morosini has unintentionally transmitted to us a small sample of Luzzatto's voice and sceptical attitude. In fact, it would be wrong here to understand the resort to silence as a gesture of agreement and consent.<sup>6</sup> It is rather a sceptical silence that preludes and introduces the suspension of judgement.<sup>7</sup> Luzzatto does not want to decide hastily not because of the risk that if “we continue to speculate we will all become Christians” – which he may have said only as an ironical baroque hyperbole – but because, as previously happened in Socrates's trial, there is not enough evidence to allow him to opt for one specific interpretation. In my opinion, the silence also introduces another interesting implication, since the unexpressed but tacitly implied conclusion is that until clearer evidence is found, both interpretations, the Jewish one and the Christian one, can retain their validity. Thus, scepticism also has a political effect, since it becomes the philosophical foundation for a peaceful coexistence and the tolerance of Jews in a Christian society, at least for the moment.

## 1 The *Theatrum Mundi* and the Trial

The central thesis of this essay is built upon the existence of a thematic continuity in Luzzatto's Italian works. This continuity is based on the connection between philosophy and politics.<sup>8</sup> The motif that creates such continuity from a narrative point of view is the trial.

Now, the trial involves three basic steps: 1) the possibility of knowing something or someone; 2) formulating a judgement about it/him/her; 3) the legitimacy and validity of the authority that formulates the judgement. The trial is based on the

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<sup>6</sup> It has been pointed out, though, that there is a Talmudic discussion about whether to consider silence as consent. See Giuseppe Veltri and Michela Torbidoni, “Alcune considerazioni sulla sospensione del giudizio e il silenzio nella tradizione ebraica scettica,” in *Seconda navigazione. Omaggio a Giovanni Reale* ed. Roberto Radice and Glauco Tiengo (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2015), 744.

<sup>7</sup> See *ibid.*, 750–51.

<sup>8</sup> See Anna Lissa, “La zooantropologia scettica,” 99, 141 ff. The connection between the two works has puzzled many scholars until recent times. See, for example, Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, 3–4: “Despite the considerable learning and eloquence of both works, one written to influence public opinion and the other without any obvious pedagogic or religious objective, Rabbi Luzzatto remains a mystery to those who would wish to understand his true intentions and ultimate beliefs.”



idea that it is possible to acquire a well-founded knowledge of the fact, or the person, that is under judgement. Once this knowledge is acquired, it is possible to formulate an exhaustive judgement. Finally, the authority that elaborates and utters the judgement must be reliable and authoritative.

The *Discourse* was specifically written to help the cause of the Venetian Jews in the Merceria trial<sup>9</sup> and more generally to offer a different evaluation of the Jewish people to the Christian public. In the *Socrates*, Luzzatto brings a new trial against the philosopher to the stage that looks like a literary, theatrical re-enactment of the one held in Athens in 399 BCE. This is not, however, a literary re-enactment that draws upon the real trial. This is a second trial that takes place after the first one, even though the first one ended with Socrates's death sentence, as Socrates himself states: "I took the hemlock from the hands of the wicked judges."<sup>10</sup> It is as if he wants to suggest that in the first "version" of the trial, he had been found guilty and sentenced to death. In this new version, however, everything must be decided anew. By making Socrates speak in the first person, Luzzatto creates a complete theatrical illusion.

This theatrical illusion in itself is not astonishing, since in Luzzatto's time the literary metaphor acknowledging the world and reality as a theatre – *theatrum mundi* – where men are occasionally called to play parts was well-known.<sup>11</sup> The metaphor of the *theatrum mundi* was an expression of the consciousness that reality was no longer submitting itself to human reason. Reality had become both differentiated and deceptive. The traditional anthropocentric thought based on and connected to Aristotelian metaphysics and scholastic philosophy was not in control of it any more, nor could it describe it any longer. Thus, Montaigne proclaimed "je ne vois le tout de rien," and with such an oxymoronic formulation, he dismissed whatever aspiration and claims metaphysical reason could put forward to confirm its ability to know the totality of reality.

On a closer look, there is also a connection between the trial and the *theatrum mundi*. A trial can be conceived as a representation on stage where the accused, the attorneys, and the jury are all called to play their part. Yet, it implies a final pro-

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<sup>9</sup> See Benjamin Ravid, "The Venetian Context of the Discourse," in this volume 243–74 especially 250–55.

<sup>10</sup> Luzzatto, *Socrates*, 121.

<sup>11</sup> In Luzzatto's time, this metaphor already had a long history, whose origins possibly dated back to Plato. Furthermore, it sometimes had a dramatic approach to human tragedy on stage – *Heraclitus flens* – while other times it focused on the ludicrous happenings of human comedy governed by fortune – *Democritus ridens*. See Ernest Robert Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter* (Tübingen: A. Francke Verlag 1993 [1948]), 148–54; Franz Link, "Götter, Gott und Spielleiter," in *Theatrum Mundi. Götter, Gott und Spielleiter im Drama von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Franz Link and Günter Niggel (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1981), 49–92; Linda Gregorian Christian, *Theatrum Mundi: The History of an Idea* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987).

nouncement, a sentence, while the theatrical representation could be left open-ended and leaves the responsibility to find an answer to the questions to the public.<sup>12</sup>

In the *Discourse* and the *Socrates*, these three above-mentioned basic assumptions about knowledge, judgment, and authority are undermined and finally debunked: they cannot stand the confrontation with the sceptical philosophical method that Luzzatto uses against them. This, I think, is the basic philosophical, political, and literary structure underlying the conception of the *Discourse* and the *Socrates* and connecting the two works. Nonetheless, it would be impossible to develop such an analysis without confronting the problem of the sources. Obviously, this problem implies an attempt to cut through a *mare magnum*; such a *mare magnum* can be braved only by circumscribing and delineating the enterprise. In this essay, I will focus especially on the philosophical sceptical foundations of Luzzatto's political thought and his appraisal of the Jewish people, and I will try to collect and discuss the sources related to these issues.

For the purposes of this analysis, I have divided this essay into two parts. In the first, I will deal with the problem of the sources, delving into layer after layer while attempting to stick to the historical sequence of classical, Renaissance, and early modern authors. I will start from Luzzatto's background knowledge of Aristotle, specifying that by the word "background" I mean that Aristotle was still part and parcel of the philosophical knowledge of the time, even for those intellectuals and scholars who were opposing him. He is present in the background of the *Discourse*, and although he does not play a pivotal role, his presence tells us something about the advancement of Luzzatto's thought, helping us to position him in the intellectual context of the time.

Luzzatto's familiarity with classic sceptical thought is of course at the core of my analysis. Accordingly, I will discuss his knowledge of sceptical authors from both the academic and the Pyrrhonian orientation. In order to give a proper shape to his political thought and his appraisal of the Jewish people, I will first dwell on Tacitus and then on the fifteenth- to seventeenth-century Tacitist literature with which Luzzatto might have been familiar. Finally, I will discuss his knowledge of some Renaissance and early modern authors such as Machiavelli, Bacon, and Montaigne.

In the second part, I will try to highlight Luzzatto's elaboration and usage of his sources in order to demonstrate that the resort to the sceptical method is not confined to the philosophical arena. Instead, it has relevant political implications and consequences. In the *Discourse*, the political implications play a major role in the survival of the Jewish people. In the *Socrates*, the problem of fair judgement is enlarged and extended to a general human level, but still retains its political implications.

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<sup>12</sup> Concerning this important connection, see Dino Pastine, *Juan Caramuel: Probabilismo ed enciclopedia* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1975), 13–25.

This confirms once more the thematic connection between the *Discourse* and the *Socrates*. I will therefore investigate the issues of knowledge, judgment, and authority in the *Discourse*. As for the *Socrates*, I will dwell mainly on the pages where Luzzatto discusses the practical and political implications of the suspension of judgment. I will show that he returns to the topics discussed in the *Discourse*, sometimes by revising them, and sometimes by elaborating upon them.

## Part I

# The Sources of Luzzatto's Philosophical and Political Scepticism

## 1 Aristotle, Aristotelianism, and Anti-Aristotelianism

I have argued elsewhere that Luzzatto's Italian works are based on a refutation of Aristotelianism.<sup>13</sup> Now, I would like to modify this statement slightly. The Aristotelian refutation notwithstanding, I feel obliged to point out that Aristotelian philosophical concepts, terminology, and even quotes are not absent from the *Discourse*. Aristotle is expressly mentioned and praised for his talents as a "practical political statesman" together with Cicero.<sup>14</sup> Luzzatto consistently mentions and quotes the *Politics* above all other Aristotelian texts. In fact, the work is directly quoted once and expressly mentioned twice:

1. As Aristotle states in book V of the *Politics*: "*Especiallly should the laws provide against any one having too much power, whether derived from friends or money.*"<sup>15</sup>
2. The laws of Phaleas regarding the division of goods have only survived in Aristotle's attacks in the second book of the *Politics*.<sup>16</sup>
3. Aristotle [too,] in the first [book] of his *Politics*,<sup>17</sup> employed all of his energy in reordering and correcting the divisions made by those two great masters of mankind.<sup>18</sup>

The above-quoted Latin passage coincides with the Latin translation of the *Politics* undertaken by Leonardo Bruni. This is a crucial fact. By quoting this specific translation, Luzzatto proves himself to be a well-informed and up-to-date intellectual,

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<sup>13</sup> Lissa, "La zooantropologia scettica," 177.

<sup>14</sup> *Discourse*, 72v.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 25r.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 25v.

<sup>17</sup> According to Lattes (*Ma'amar*, 158 n. 27), Luzzatto is referring to the second book of the *Politics*, where Aristotle discusses the State and the constitution of society and criticises Socrates and Plato.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 22r–v.

for he demonstrates an awareness of the restoration of Aristotelian texts executed during the Humanist and Renaissance periods by means of new Latin translations based on Humanist philological rules. Leonardo Bruni's translation quoted by Luzzatto is counted among the most important translations available in Luzzatto's time, since Bruni was the first scholar and translator to distance himself from the medieval practice of word-to-word translation, trying to render the Greek original in a polished, precise Latin.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, I cannot prove that Luzzatto also read the other works of Aristotle in Bruni's translations, since there are no further direct quotes from him in the *Discourse*. Interestingly enough, I must also point out that Luzzatto's Latin quote coincides with Bruni's translation with Thomas Aquinas's commentary and not with the renowned Iunta edition with Averroes's commentary.<sup>20</sup> This fact may be somewhat deceptive. However, Luzzatto was familiar with Averroes's commentaries on Aristotle, since he mentions them in consideration XVI, "Regarding the Jews' Application to their Studies and the Various Classes of Sages":

Some years after Rabbi Moses, Maestro Levi, a scholarly man whose talents could match those of any other learned man, succeeded him. Although his life ended at the age of about thirty-two, he commented on all the works of Aristotle and expounded on much of the Arab Averroes in Hebrew. Some of them [his books] are manuscripts in my possession.<sup>21</sup>

The above-listed passages suggest first of all that when Luzzatto speaks of Aristotle, he is not referring to second-hand transmission, as it happens in the case of the Aristotelian texts conveyed by Thomas Aquinas. It seems possible to suggest that he read Aristotle first-hand and in a good and trustworthy translation. Furthermore, he appreciated the practical aspects and implications of Aristotle's political thought, whose advice is particularly evoked when he discusses general political issues that are related to the Jewish people. The second and the third above-listed passages refer to the orderly class division of the population and it introduces the arguments discussed in consideration VI, "Why the Mercantile Profession Ought to Be Kept Apart from Others," where social order and the distinction of the mercantile profession are functional to the role of the Jews as merchants in Venice. In a few words, the mercantile profession ought to be kept apart from the others, and the Jews are the best-suited candidates to practise it.

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<sup>19</sup> For the relevance of Bruni's translation, see Charles Schmidt, *Aristotle and the Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1983), 67–68. On the same lines as Schmidt, see Luca Bianchi, "Continuity and Change in the Aristotelian Tradition," in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 49–71.

<sup>20</sup> *Aristotelis Stagiritae Politicorum*, book 5, lectio 7, 79v: "Maxime vero lege ita providere conandum est ut nemini sit excessiva potentia, neque amicorum neque pecuniarum." In the 1550 Iunta edition, the text is different: "Maxime vero lege ita providere conandum est, ne alicui nimium sit excessiva potentia, neque amicorum, neque pecuniarum." *Tertium Volumen Aristotelis Stagiritae libri Moralem totam philosophiam complectentes cum Averrois Cordubensis in Moralia Nicomachiae expositione* (Venetiis: Apud Iuntas, 1550), 144r.

<sup>21</sup> *Discourse*, 79r.

The first and second above-quoted passages are drawn from consideration VII, “Wealth Ought to be Limited and [Kept] in Circulation,” which is concerned with a balanced distribution of riches and wealth. Accordingly, a reference to the Aristotelian concept of distributive justice from the *Nicomachean Ethics* opens the entire discussion: “The best, most cautious politician has the duty of ensuring that the wealth and resources of the city are divided and distributed among the citizens into suitable mathematical proportions according to the rules dictated by distributive justice.”<sup>22</sup>

Here again, the Jews can prove themselves very useful. In fact, the mercantile profession can make the people who practise it very rich and cause an imbalance in the distribution of wealth and a hindrance to its circulation. The Jews can contain this imbalance. Jewish richness, Luzzatto argues, never lasts long because the Jews have too many children, because of the ceaseless changes in their fortunes, and because of the special laws applying to them. Thus, allowing the Jews to practise the mercantile profession will make the circulation of money and the balance of riches easier to achieve for the government of the Serenissima.

Aristotelian terminology and concepts also come in handy when restrictive measures against the Jewish people are involved. This is the case with consideration XII, “The Replies to the Arguments Used against the Jews by Three Kinds of People.” Here, Luzzatto confutes a series of objections against the Jewish presence in a city, specifically to the politicians who argue that members issuing from the Jewish and Christian communities may mix and cause dissensions and disturbances. To this argument, Luzzatto answers as follows:

With regard to discord and dissension, one answer could be that the Jews are not different from the Christians as black is from white. Black and white do not match, although they belong to the same genus of colour. On the contrary, Jews and Christians are different from each other in the same way as the qualities of being sweet and being red, which are absolutely separated and unrelated to each other. Thus, [their only connection is] that they belong to the most general genus of quality that can be found in the same subject. In the same way, the Jews are separate and distinct from the Christians, and only rarely do they come into competition and contention regarding religious matters.<sup>23</sup>

This passage is relevant to emphasise that Luzzatto is still using Aristotelian concepts and terminology and also and especially that he is using them in order to discuss an issue that is very important, if not crucial, to him. In fact, he strives to demonstrate that Jews and Christians are too different to be able to mix on the basis of Aristotelian categories such as genus and quality.

The relationship to Aristotle’s doctrines becomes more critical when Luzzatto leaves the practical political realm in order to enter the field of philosophy. This is the case for his appraisal of truth, especially the problem of distinguishing the truth

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 25r.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 41r–v.

from a lie. This is a seminal argument, which is at the foundation and origin not only of the *Discourse*, but also of the later philosophical treatise, the *Socrates*. The *Discourse* is dedicated to the lovers of truth. In the dedication, the author acknowledges the Aristotelian concept of truth formulated in the *De anima* as *invita*, free from passion and clearly distinguishable from falsehood, since human beings cannot escape the alternative between falsehood and truth.<sup>24</sup> In Luzzatto's times, however, the borders between the two of them were too blurred and the Aristotelian definition could no longer be completely valid, or, to put it better, these concepts were no longer fit to describe and define the surrounding reality.

The problem of truth is first of all a philosophical problem that has to do with the possibility of acquiring a knowledge that can prove itself trustworthy and helpful for human beings. One example will suffice to give an idea of the relevance of the issue. At the beginning of consideration XV, "Considering Various Objections Brought Forward by Cornelius Tacitus against the Ancient Jewish People, and Their Resolution," Luzzatto strives to distinguish and isolate the truth about the Jewish people from the lies that have been spread against it: "The lie can be compared to the shadow that, despite being made of mere vain privation, nonetheless possesses borders that circumscribe it and that depend on solid and real bodies. In the same way, a lie springs and derives from a substratum."<sup>25</sup>

Once again, Aristotelian terminology – namely privation and substratum – is used to discuss problems concerning the Jews. The usage of this terminology could even seem ironic were it not for the consequences such lies used to have for the Jews. With a certain irony and yet with an awareness of the implied dangers awaiting the Jews, Luzzatto turns the lie into a shadow deprived of substance, but still stemming from a primary substratum, that is, matter.

Criticism of Aristotle resurfaces in consideration XVI, "Regarding the Jews' Application to their Studies and the Various Classes of Sages," where Luzzatto isolates and discusses three classes of sages: the rabbis, the philosophers, and the kabbalists. Much of his appreciation and esteem goes to philosophers such as Ḥasdai Crescas (1340–1410/11): "After him, there was Rabbi Ḥasdai, who had a most sharp intelligence. He was the first who dared to oppose Aristotelian doctrine, as the illustrious Signor Giovanni Francesco Pico Mirandola relates in the book *Examination of the Vanities of the Nations*."<sup>26</sup>

The reference shows that Luzzatto was familiar with early Aristotelian criticism as it had been expressed in Jewish philosophy by Crescas in the second half of the fourteenth century. However, he connects it to Giovanni Francesco (or Gianfrancesco) Pico della Mirandola's *Examen vanitatis doctrinae gentium et veritatis christianae disciplinae* (1520), possibly in order to make it more palatable to Italian readers.

<sup>24</sup> See *ibid.*, 3r n. 2.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 58v.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 79v.

With all probability, Luzzatto is referring here to book 6, chapters 2 to 6, where Gianfrancesco reports Crescas's counter-arguments against Aristotle's definition of movement and place and his demonstration of the non-existence of the void.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the mention of Gianfrancesco's *Examen* does not introduce sceptical arguments, as Luzzatto had already done in consideration XV by quoting directly Sextus. The real point is the praise of the criticism of Aristotle's *Physics*.

This issue deserves some further explanation. As is well-known, Popkin situates the beginning of the history of modern scepticism during the years when Savonarola and the group of intellectuals gravitating around him were active.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, he attributes to Gianfrancesco the merit of being the first author who ever made significant use of Pyrrhonian ideas in his *Examen*,<sup>29</sup> although he did this with the purpose of debunking philosophical arguments and to promote a knowledge based solely on Christian revelation. Obviously, in the *Discourse* Luzzatto tries to keep his distance from religious apologetics. He even avoids the mention of the second part of the *Examen*. I am personally not inclined to think that this happens only because of the connection to Christianity. In fact, in this context he is not interested in apologetics, nor is he trying to introduce sceptical arguments. I think he chooses to do this in order to remain in the field of a pure philosophical discussion that is specifically related to Crescas's critique of Aristotle. What this critique consists of, Luzzatto does not care to say; perhaps because he is only giving his readers an overview of the most renowned Jewish philosophers without entering into the details of their arguments.

My analysis shows that Luzzatto's relationship to Aristotle is twofold.<sup>30</sup> There is a first layer involving practical political advice to be followed in order to preserve

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27 Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, *Examen vanitatis doctrinae gentium et veritatis christianae disciplinae*, 175r–179v. See also Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Crescas' Critique of Aristotle: Problems of Aristotle's Physics in Jewish and Arabic Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929), chapter 2, "Infinity, Space and Vacuum," 38–69. See also David Harari, "Mi-hu ha-melumad ha-yehudi she-derkho noda' ha-sefer 'Or ha-Shem le-Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola?" ("Who was the Jewish Scholar who made Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola acquainted with *The Light of the Lord*?") *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 14 (1998): 257–69 [in Hebrew]; Mauro Zonta, "The Influence of Hasdai Crescas's Philosophy on Some Aspects of Sixteenth-Century Philosophy and Science," in *Religious Confessions and the Sciences in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Jürgen Hel and Annette Winkelmann (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 71–78. The reference to Gianfrancesco in the *Discourse* was noted by Ruderman, who, however, did not discuss it (Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 159 and 173).

28 Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Skepticism from Savonarola to Bayle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 22. See also Gian Mario Cao, "Inter Alias Philosophorum Gentium Sectas, et Humani, et Mites: Gianfrancesco Pico and the Sceptics," in *Renaissance Scepticisms*, ed. Gianni Paganini and José R. Maia Neto (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009), 127–47; Lucia Pappalardo, *Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola: fede, immaginazione e scetticismo* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015). Concerning early interest in academic scepticism in Florence in the fifteenth century, see Anna De Pace, *La scepsi, il sapere e l'anima: Dissonanze nella cerchia laurenziana* (Milan: Edizioni Universitarie di Lettere Economia Diritto, 2002).

29 *Ibid.*, 19.

30 In fact, there are other scanty references to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and *On the Heavens* which deserve to be highlighted, although without further discussion. This is the case for three passages

the power in a state. This is a rather traditional approach to Aristotle, whose political texts were generally used to discuss the best form of government, the aims of social organisation, and the legitimisation and preservation of political power. Aristotle's empirical approach was free from any religious considerations or engagements. However, during the sixteenth century, it was subsumed under the political doctrines and agenda of Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Neo-Stoics, and it became the foundation for legitimising political absolutism by tracing a line connecting the power of the *paterfamilias*, the power of the prince, and the power of God.<sup>31</sup> The problem of the preservation of the state by means of carefully balancing riches and harmoniously dividing society into classes is typical of Tacitist political literature. Interpreted from this point of view, Luzzatto seems to have conservative political inclinations – but it may also be that he was not a real conservative, but only a pragmatist acknowledging the predominance of a system and trying to make the Jewish people fit into it.

In a second and more in-depth layer, there is Luzzatto's critical attitude towards Aristotle's philosophical doctrines and system, as is the case with the references to early anti-Aristotelian authors such as Crescas and the problem of distinguishing the truth from a lie. This attitude is proof that Luzzatto was aware that the Aristotelian system could no longer give an exhaustive description of reality.

## 2 Politics

### 2.1 Machiavelli

Like many other early modern authors, Machiavelli is never explicitly mentioned in the *Discourse*.<sup>32</sup> However, there are several indirect quotes from both *Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livius* and *The Prince*. Although the reference to *The Prince* is not very meaningful from the point of view of the content, since it is mostly a

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from consideration XVI: "For it is necessary that the measure and the measured be alike, as Aristotle says" (81r); "And the future and past tense are interchangeable and mixed together, which is obvious to the grammarians. Such an opinion [was] similarly expressed by Aristotle in book four of the *Metaphysics*" (81v); "This is the case, for example, with the elements, which are connected with the symbolic qualities, as Aristotle demonstrates in his book *De Coelo et Mundo*" (82v). In this last passage, Luzzatto is discussing a kabbalistic doctrine about all mundane things sharing a near and proximate gradation of short, distinct intervals.

<sup>31</sup> See Michael Stolleis, *Storia del diritto pubblico in Germania*, vol. 1, *Pubblicistica dell'impero e scienza di polizia 1600–1800* (Milan: Giuffrè Editore, 2008), 55 ff.

<sup>32</sup> This is not astonishing, especially because the entirety of his work had already been entered in the *Index librorum prohibitorum* by 1552. See Friederich Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson in der neueren Geschichte* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1944). English translation by Douglas Scott: *Machiavellism: The Doctrine of Raison d'État and Its Place in Modern History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 46.



rhetorical artifice,<sup>33</sup> it can at least be considered as proof that Luzzatto read and possibly owned a copy of the work.

The references to the *Discourses* are more intriguing:

1. A deteriorated fragment of an aged statue would be worth a respectable amount of money in the eyes of a curious antiques dealer if either Phidias or Lysippus had sculpted it. Similarly, the relic of the ancient Jewish People should not be depreciated, even though it is deformed and disfigured from distress and a long period of captivity. Moreover, it is a common consensus among men that this People once took [its] form of government and institution of life from the Supreme Opifex.<sup>34</sup>
2. I sometimes marvel that the Romans kept their false superstitions and erected altars to deify the inventors of worthwhile professions – to such an extent that they even consecrated many sumptuous temples to Fortuna.<sup>35</sup>

The first reference is taken from the general introduction to the *Discourse* and was first discussed by Giuseppe Veltri.<sup>36</sup> The text, however, deserves a full quotation:

When I consider, then, how much respect is given to antiquity and how many times (to pass over countless examples) a fragment of an antique statue has been bought at a high price in order that the buyer may have it near him to bring reputation to his house with it, and to have it imitated by those who take pleasure in that art, and when I know that the latter then with their utmost skill attempt in all their works to imitate it, and when I see, on the other hand, that the most worthy activities which histories show us, which have been carried on in ancient kingdoms and republics by kings, generals, citizens, lawgivers, and others who have laboured for their native land, are sooner admired than imitated (rather they are so much avoided by everyone in every least thing that no sign of that ancient worth remains among us), I can do no other than at the same time marvel and grieve over it.<sup>37</sup>

The intertextual relationship between the two passages seems to address Luzzatto's apologetic intention that aims at the legitimisation of the Jewish people on the basis of its antiquity, which goes far beyond classical culture. This, however, would be only a first layer of interpretation. The imitation of antiquity was a much-debated issue in Machiavelli's time. Many interpreters of his works and thought have highlighted that Machiavelli's usage of the past breaks with the Humanistic concept of the plain imitation of the past. Experience of contemporary facts as well as a careful reading of ancient histories allowing the reader to draw from them a lesson applicable to the past are directing Machiavelli in his political analysis.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> See *Discourse*, 3r n. 1.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 6v.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 18v.

<sup>36</sup> See *ibid.*, 6v n. 8.

<sup>37</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourses*, "Preface" in *Chief Works*, 1:190–91.

<sup>38</sup> See what Machiavelli himself states in the introduction to *The Prince*: "I have found among my treasures nothing I hold dearer or value so high as my understanding of great men's actions, gained in my lengthy experience with recent matters and my continual reading on ancient ones" (*The Prince* in *Chief Works*, 1:10). See also Machiavelli, *Discourses* in *Chief Works*, 1:188: "In it [the *Dis-*

Machiavelli's main problem was the decadence of the Italian states, and Luzzatto has a similar preoccupation. In fact, his main point is not, or at least not only, the antiquity of the Jewish people as such. Instead, he is exceedingly worried because of the cultural decadence of the Jewish people in the Diaspora, which he considers a consequence of the loss of political independence. He mentions the issue in the "Preface to the Entire Work": "The Jewish Nation has been as famous and illustrious in past centuries for human prosperity and divine favour as it is nowadays known both for suffering disasters and for its continued and constant endurance."<sup>39</sup>

In consideration XVI, "Regarding the Jews' Application to Their Studies and the Various Classes of Sages," he returns to the subject and formulates his political and cultural problem more clearly:

Moreover, the Jews were no less renowned for their proficiency in the arts and sciences, since by universal consensus they had established the foundations of the most excellent teachings, [...]. The Scripture has unending praise for the erudition and knowledge of the Jewish Nation, as well as for its valour and skill with arms, [...]. However, soon after they were forced to yield to the divine decree and were subjugated by the Romans. The Temple was destroyed, the city invaded, religion downtrodden, the people taken captive and dispersed. [At that time,] not only had they completely lost all military glory, being entirely destitute of courage and enfeebled in spirit, but the light of knowledge was almost extinguished within them and the splendour of their erudition was dimmed, for virtues want to be accompanied and associated with leisure and the comforts of life.

This was more detrimental and a greater blow than the first [the military defeat], for even if the decline of military reputation causes subjection and obedience, it will not result in a complete loss of honour and glory for the people, even if they have to show deference to others.<sup>40</sup>

For obvious reasons, Luzzatto could not openly regret the loss of the military value and political independence of the Jewish people, nor could he exhort the Jews to take up arms and set themselves free, as Machiavelli did in his "Exhortation to Grasp Italy and Set Her Free from the Barbarians" that closes *The Prince*. Accordingly, while Machiavelli says of the Italians that "when they are in armies, they make no showing,"<sup>41</sup> Luzzatto, in a more prudent and diplomatic fashion, explains that since the Jews have no access to arms, they must apply themselves to secular studies if they ever want to have a hope of survival and respect:

Certainly, the Jews, finding themselves in their present state of subjection and having no freedom whatsoever apart from applying their minds to study and doctrine, should devote them-

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courses] I have set out all I know and all I have learned in the course of my long experience and steady reading in the affairs of the world." And below, 191: "As we read [the ancient histories] we do not draw from them that sense or taste that flavor which they really have."

<sup>39</sup> *Discourse*, 5r.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 74r.

<sup>41</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince* (*Chief Works*, 1:94).

selves to these with all their skill and industry. They should be aware of the fact that the unity of dogmas, the patronage granted by the princes, and the protection from so much oppression were obtained over such a long period of time, humanly speaking, from the learning of a virtuous few. They acquired credibility and authority under those who ruled, since they were deprived of all other means of aspiring to the favours and graces of the great in any other way. [The Jews] should [therefore] rest assured that if they were to lack appreciation deriving from their command of [liberal] letters and the esteem of the virtuous, they would incur a considerable decline and a more despicable oppression than they have ever endured in the past.<sup>42</sup>

Indeed, Luzzatto's cultural programme does not plead for secular culture for the sake of the acquisition of pure knowledge. His cultural programme is also a survival programme that stems from a political analysis of the Jewish past and present. Like Machiavelli, he does not plead for a plain imitation of ancient histories, but he insists on renewing the ancient glory founded on knowledge, adapting it to new circumstances in order to improve the situation of the Jews.

The second reference to *fortuna*, fortune, also creates a crucial link with Machiavelli's thought. In his works, and most of all in *The Prince*, where it has a whole chapter for itself – "Fortune's Power in Human Affairs and How She Can Be Forestalled" – fortune or chance plays a pivotal role. Its power, however, is not boundless: "Nonetheless, in order not to annul our free will, I judge it true that Fortune may be mistress of one half our actions but that even she leaves the other half, or almost, under our control."<sup>43</sup> Fortune's power can be controlled; provisions can be made in order to limit its damages.<sup>44</sup>

Luzzatto's fortune seems to have an almost unlimited power. "The vagaries of fortune"<sup>45</sup> can bring about the failure of mercantile enterprises; the mainland's commercial routes are safer from "the ravages of fortune";<sup>46</sup> Jews are pushed by their needs "to test fortune" with mercantile enterprises;<sup>47</sup> the possession of real estate "impedes the volatility of human fortune";<sup>48</sup> the Jews "extended their dominion as far as their good fortune guided them";<sup>49</sup> "after the fortune of the Jews had changed" the monument of national glory enshrined in the Temple of Jerusalem had become "little more than a joke, mocked by foreigners";<sup>50</sup> finally, after having

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<sup>42</sup> *Discourse*, 85v.

<sup>43</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince* (*Chief Works*, 1:90).

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Viroli on Machiavelli's idea of politics: "In his writings, politics assumes a more general significance meaning the art of dealing with contingent events, with fickle fortune, the symbol of pure, uncontrolled and unlegitimated contingency." Maurizio Viroli, *From Politics to Reason of State: The Acquisition and Transformation of the Language of Politics 1250–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 127.

<sup>45</sup> *Discourse*, 11r.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 19r.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 19v.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 26v.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 47v.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 59v.

been “at the height of fortune,” peoples are destined to be “cast down into the abyss of oblivion.”<sup>51</sup>

These examples give an idea of the presence and influence of fortune throughout the whole of the *Discourse*, and they also show that in Luzzatto’s text the power of fortune covers the whole sphere of human life on both a personal and a collective level. From this point of view, Luzzatto takes a step further in comparison to Machiavelli. For him, men, and more specifically Jews, are virtually deprived of any active power to limit the damage that fortune may cause. I would suggest that it is possible to bring the comparison even further by suggesting that for Machiavelli, Italy was an example of the power of fortune without provisions made to counter it, while for Luzzatto, the Jewish people and its misfortunes seemed to become a demonstration of fortune’s power. However, in his time there were no provisions which could really counter it any more. In fact, the only thing that men could do when confronted with fortune was to behave as Socrates did in Luzzatto’s homonymous work. At the beginning of his defensive argument, the philosopher states rather proudly that he has always been “adamant and indifferent in facing the turmoil and the encroachments of fortune.”<sup>52</sup> Indeed, in the *Socrates*, philosophical doctrines are exposed “to the blows of indifferent fortune”<sup>53</sup> like all human affairs.

This examination based on an analysis of and comparison with Luzzatto’s sources has given an interesting result. There is no criticism or condemnation of Machiavelli’s thought in the *Discourse*, nor is there in the *Socrates*. On the contrary, Luzzatto uses some of Machiavelli’s capital political concepts in order to develop his political analysis of the condition and potentialities of the Jewish people. Accordingly, Machiavelli’s influence must be carefully differentiated from the arguments based on the concept of reason of state and those fashioned by the political current labelled Tacitism.

## 2.2 Tacitism

The presence of Tacitist arguments permeates the whole of the *Discourse*, since in Luzzatto’s times Tacitism was very successful and political practices inspired by it were common.<sup>54</sup> However, in order to better understand Luzzatto’s political ap-

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 88v.

<sup>52</sup> *Socrates*, 120 and 121.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>54</sup> It will be enough here to mention some Tacitist authors whose books were published in Venice, such as Scipione Ammirato, *Discorsi del signor Scipione Ammirato sopra Cornelio Tacito* (in Venetia: appresso Matthio Valentino, 1607); Virgilio Malvezzi, *Discorsi sopra Cornelio Tacito del Marchese Virgilio Malvezzi al Serenissimo Ferdinando II Gran Duca di Toscana* (in Venetia: presso Marco Ginammi, 1635); Traiano Boccalini, *Ragguagli di Parnaso Centuria Prima* (In Venetia: Appresso Pietro Farri, 1612); id., *Ragguagli di Parnaso Centuria Seconda* (in Venetia: Appresso Barezzo Barezzi, 1613); modern edition Traiano Boccalini, *Ragguagli di Parnaso e scritti minori*, ed. Luigi Firpo, 3 vols. (Bari: Laterza, 1948).

proach, it is essential to make the difference between Machiavelli's influence on the one hand and Tacitism and reason of state on the other as clear and as distinct as possible.

Contemporary scholars have nowadays gone far beyond Meinecke's statement attributing the beginning of the history of reason of state to Machiavelli.<sup>55</sup> In fact, they tend to assume that politics is the art of governing a state by following the principles of justice and reason, while reason of state is the art of preserving and expanding a state.<sup>56</sup>

It would perhaps be too much to suggest that Luzzatto understood Tacitism the way contemporary scholarship has. Nonetheless, I think it would be fair to assert that when he was writing the *Discourse*, he was well-aware that Machiavelli's time, especially the time of the Republican experiment in Florence, was over and done with. The monarchies of Europe and the Venetian oligarchic system with them were moving towards the emergence and consolidation of absolutism. Accordingly, he pays homage to the tradition of the *Laus Venetiarum*, and in so doing he conforms to the pattern initiated by Gasparo Contarini in his *De magistratibus et republica Venetorum* (1551) by comparing Venice to Rome and inclining in favour of the former. Nonetheless, he is also aware that the Jews had to find a place in a state that was all but republican. The Venetian government was distancing itself from the tolerant inclinations it had had in Isaac Abrabanel's times,<sup>57</sup> and was shifting to a form of oligarchic absolutism, which was going to adjust itself to the upcoming European absolutism. In these new times, as Guicciardini stated, "Cornelius Tacitus teaches those who live under tyrants how to live and act prudently; just as he teaches tyrants ways to secure their tyranny."<sup>58</sup> This is the Tacitus that is quoted and discussed by Tacitist authors who wrote anti-Machiavellian Machiavellian litera-

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<sup>55</sup> Meinecke, *Machiavellism*, 29. See also 41: "[Machiavelli was] the first person to discover the real nature of *raison d'état*." In fact, as Meinecke acknowledges, Machiavelli never uses the phrase "ragion di stato," which was invented by Giovanni Della Casa in his address to Charles V (ibid., 46–47). The original phrase is "quell'utile che hoggi si chiama ragion di stato." Giovanni Della Casa, "Oratione di M. Giovanni Della Casa, Scritta a Carlo V Imperadore, intorno alla restituzione di Piacenza," in id., *Rime et Prose di M. Giovanni Della Casa* (in Venetia: Appresso Domenico & Gio. Battista Guerra, fratelli, 1567), 166. The phrase is used with all its negative implications and in opposition to morality and civil reason.

<sup>56</sup> Viroli, *From Politics*, 2–3. See also Gianfranco Borrelli, "La teorica della ragion di stato," in *Il contributo italiano alla storia del Pensiero – Diritto* (2012), [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/la-teorica-della-ragion-di-stato\\_\(Il-Contributo-italiano-alla-storia-del-Pensiero:-Diritto\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/la-teorica-della-ragion-di-stato_(Il-Contributo-italiano-alla-storia-del-Pensiero:-Diritto)/) (accessed November 13, 2016), and the annexed, up-to-date bibliography.

<sup>57</sup> See also Veltri's perplexities about the *laus Venetiarum* in the *Discourse* (Veltri, *Renaissance*, 216–19).

<sup>58</sup> Francesco Guicciardini, *Maxims and Reflections (Ricordi)*, trans. Mario Domandi (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1970), "Maxim 18," 45. See also ibid., "Maxim 13," 44: "If you want to know what the thoughts of tyrants are, read in Cornelius Tacitus the last conversations of the dying Augustus with Tiberius."

ture. In a few words, since Machiavelli had asserted the waning of the traditional medieval politics that combined Christian ethics with political action, the Jesuits approved the usage of Machiavellian political advice as long as the princes used it to preserve the state and the Christian religion at the same time.<sup>59</sup> Machiavellian thought pours into Counter-Reformation thought and goes through essential modifications. Among the Jesuit authors who approved and disseminated this approach are Giovanni Botero, a “gesuita d’intelletto,”<sup>60</sup> together with Possevino and Ribadeneyra.

Giovanni Botero is quoted without being openly mentioned in consideration XII, “The Arguments Used against the Jews by Three Kinds of People, and the Replies to Their Arguments”:

Three kinds of people argue against and antagonise the Jewish Nation: religious zealots, politicians and statesmen, and the common and vulgar people. [...]. Politicians say that it is not beneficial to tolerate a multitude of religions in the same city both because of the scandal and the bad example that one group makes for another, as well as the dissent, disunity, and hatred that can arise among the inhabitants of the city.<sup>61</sup>

The argument stems from Botero’s *Della ragion di stato*<sup>62</sup> and is articulated as follows:

Farò fine il consiglio dato da Mecenate ad Augusto Cesare: Onora – dice – Dio perpetuamente, conforme alle leggi antiche, e fa che gli altri facciano il medesimo; odia e gastiga quelli, che faranno novità nelle cose divine, e ciò non solo per rispetto agli dèi, i quali però chi sprezza non farà mai conto d’altra cosa, ma perché quelli, che alterano la religione, spingono molti all’alterazione delle cose, onde nascono congiure sedizioni e conventicole; cose poco a proposito per il principato.<sup>63</sup>

The fact that the Jews are included in this advice is beyond doubt, since Botero sets the subjects who belong to the Holy See apart from those who belong to a sect, and for him Judaism is a sect.<sup>64</sup> Luzzatto counters this argument by pointing out that

<sup>59</sup> For this passage, see Giuseppe Toffanin, *Machiavelli e il “Tacitismo.” La “Politica storica” al tempo della controriforma* (Naples: Guida Editori 1972 [1921]), chapter 4, “Machiavelli e la controriforma,” 87–105.

<sup>60</sup> Toffanin, *Machiavelli*, 100. See also Luigi Firpo, who wrote that those who came after Botero represented “la folta coorte dei teorici italiani della ragion di stato, destinata ad esaurire in sottigliezze dialettiche e in espedienti della precettistica più smaliziata l’ultimo vigore intellettuale d’una generazione in cui si spegneva una tradizione politica smagliante.” Luigi Firpo, “Introduzione” in Giovanni Botero, *Della ragion di stato con tre libri. Delle cause della grandezza delle città due Aggiunte e un Discorso sulla popolazione di Roma*, ed. Luigi Firpo (Turin: UTET, 1948), 21. The quotes from *Della ragion di stato* are taken from this edition. For Botero’s influence on Luzzatto’s concept of the development of cities in the *Discourse*, see Bachi, “La dottrina sulla dinamica.”

<sup>61</sup> *Discourse*, 40v.

<sup>62</sup> Which was originally published in Venice: Giovanni Botero. *Della ragion di stato libri dieci con tre libri delle cause della grandezza e magnificenza delle città* (in Venetia: Appresso i Gioliti, 1589).

<sup>63</sup> Botero, *Della ragion di Stato*, 136–37.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 56–57.

the mixing of Jews and Christians is actually impossible, since the former live secluded in a ghetto and have different customs and mixed marriages are severely prosecuted by law. To understand what kind of Tacitism Luzzatto had in mind, it is essential to note that the argument he counters here mixes together politics and religion. More specifically, he is answering those “politicians” who blame religious difference for political disorder. This mixture could prove itself very dangerous for the survival of the Jews in Italy in the Counter-Reformation period.

To close this discussion, it is important to point out that Tacitism, and more specifically Botero’s arguments, will surface once again at the end of the *Socrates*, where political prudence is discussed. When Socrates concludes his discussion with Cratylus, who has finally proved to him that it is impossible to obtain a knowledge with solid foundations and invited him to trust the probable, he undertakes a new examination in search of the criteria to follow in ordinary life. Prudence is the first criterion he puts under examination, and Pericles is the first politician he consults. The resort to Pericles creates an intertextual relationship with Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*,<sup>65</sup> where prudence – practical wisdom – is the capacity to decide which things are good and bad for men, a capacity with which Pericles was endowed. Yet Luzzatto’s Pericles is not interested in the distinction between good and bad. He has turned into a Tacitist, and as such when he answers the question about whether prudence is more needed to conquer or to keep a state, he has no doubt about the fact that a prince will need more prudence to keep it:

Some of them expressed their opinion in favour of the acquisition [of a state], but Pericles maintained strongly that in the preservation prudence would prevail much more. He put forward that renowned saying: “*difficilius est, provincias obtinere, qua facere. viribus parantur, iure retinentur.*” As if it was almost the same as saying: “*fortuna parantur, prudentia retinentur.*” Then he entered into the details of the demonstration about how much prudence would overcome fortune.<sup>66</sup>

This approach to prudence together with the Latin quotes from Florus creates an intertextual relation with Botero’s *Della ragion di stato*.<sup>67</sup> Socrates, however, is not satisfied with Pericles’s answer, who after all did not give a clear definition of prudence, and moves on in the discussion, leaving Tacitism aside. At the end of the debate, a clear definition of prudence appears as unattainable as a definition of human knowledge has been. Therefore, in the businesses of life man can only follow the probable, which is pliable to human exigencies and can be used according to the requirements of each and every specific situation to establish the difference

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<sup>65</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 6.5 (1140b7–10). On this subject, see also Giuseppe Veltri and Anna Lissa, “La prudence de Simone Luzzatto dans le grand théâtre du monde,” in *La vertu des païens*, ed. Sylvie Taussig (Paris: Editions Kimé), 143–72.

<sup>66</sup> *Socrates*, 324.

<sup>67</sup> Botero, *Della ragion di stato*, 60. See *ibid.* for the details of Florus’s source.

between what is good or bad for man, a difference that can only temporarily be considered valid.

At the end of this analysis, it seems possible to suggest that Luzzatto was clear in his mind about the difference between Machiavelli's political thought and Tacitism intended as a political authority that legitimates religious authority and is somehow legitimated by it. The real danger for the Jews is not Machiavelli, but this kind of Tacitism whose authority must be confuted by resorting to the sceptical method. As for the probable, it can be used to make political decisions only if it is supported by experience and empirical knowledge purported by the practical statesmen.

### 3 The Experience of Ancient and Modern Human Affairs

#### 3.1 Empirical Knowledge and the Practical Statesmen: Socrates, Aristotle, Cicero, and Tacitus

Empirical knowledge is, for Luzzatto, the premise of practical politics. A confirmation of this approach can be found in the clever advice from the practical statesmen that punctuates the *Discourse*. The main ones are Cicero, Aristotle, and Tacitus. Cicero and Aristotle are together praised for being "practical statesmen," in opposition to Socrates and Plato the "political theoreticians."<sup>68</sup> I have already discussed the influence of Aristotle's political thought above. As far as Cicero is concerned, Luzzatto puts him among the practical statesmen, and consequently he often and openly quotes the *On Duties*, always in the context of a discussion of practical politics. Some examples will give an idea of the role he plays for Luzzatto:

1. As Cicero wrote when discussing the subject of trade:*[I]t even seems to deserve the highest respect if those who are engaged in it, satiated, or rather, I should say, satisfied with the fortunes they have made, make their way from the port to a country estate, as they have often made it from the sea into port[.].* And he adds: *"[O]f all the occupations by which gain is secured, none is better than agriculture, [...], none more becoming to a freeman."*<sup>69</sup>
2. The second reason is the fact that in the seventh year the goods of the earth become the common property of the entire people. Therefore, the common people and the poor could enjoy this sharing of goods as long as they desired and aspired to do so. This could not be tolerated in the political state, because, as Cicero explains: *"That speech deserves unqualified condemnation, for it favoured an equal distribution of property; and what more ruinous policy than that could be conceived? For the chief purpose in the establishment of constitutional state and municipal governments was that individual property rights might be secured. For, although it was by Nature's guidance that men were drawn together into communities, it was in the hope of safeguarding their possessions that they sought the protection of cities."*<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> *Discourse*, 72v.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 11r.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 72r–v.



Clearly, the subjects are various, but all related to practical problems of government, such as trade or the safeguarding of individual property. Luzzatto's choice is also not unusual, since the *On Duties* was widely read and already being discussed by fifteenth-century Humanists.<sup>71</sup>

Yet the most interesting case is perhaps Tacitus, who, like other authors quoted in the *Discourse*, has a double identity: he behaved like a bad historian when he discussed Jewish customs and religion, but at the same time he stands among the best practical statesmen in history:

The famous Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus deserves to be counted among the earliest masters of civil government for his teachings on and experience in politics. [He has a] lively and energetic eloquence, in which he is more inclined to allusions than to concise statements, zeal in penetrating the secrets of princes, gravity of sentences, acrimony in censuring depraved actions, maturity of judgment regarding human events, and other distinguished virtues that entered into his *Histories*.<sup>72</sup>

As a master of civil government, much of his practical advice is quoted by Luzzatto. For the sake of brevity, I will cite only a little of it:

1. Therefore Augustus, the excellent ruler of people and conqueror of all peoples, stated, as Tacitus has written: "*He first conciliated the army by gratuities, the populace by cheapened corn, the world by the amenities of peace.*"<sup>73</sup>
2. I would present them with that famous saying of Tacitus regarding the astrologers who were sentenced to exile from the city of Rome: "*A tribe which in our state will always be both forbidden and retained.*"<sup>74</sup>

Of course, this kind of approach to Tacitus, or to the other practical statesmen, is in keeping with a general trend of the time. Nonetheless, in Luzzatto's case these quotes deserved to be pointed out and distinguished because practical political experience plays an important role in connection with the resort to the probable in practical life, as I will show below.

### 3.2 Bacon and Empiricism

Bacon is never directly mentioned in the *Discourse*, but at the time when the book was published, the *Novum Organum* and the *Essays* had already enjoyed a remarkable success. Recently, Giuseppe Veltri has traced some topics Luzzatto borrowed from Bacon, namely the concept of the truth as "naked" stemming from the *Novum*

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<sup>71</sup> See Charles B. Schmitt, *Cicero Scepticus: A Study of the Influence of the Academica in the Renaissance* (Dordrecht: Springer, 1972), 15.

<sup>72</sup> *Discourse*, 57v.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 32v.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 42r.

*Organum*,<sup>75</sup> which was published in Latin in 1620 and to which Luzzatto had easy access.<sup>76</sup> Veltri has also shown that Luzzatto borrowed the concepts of usury as a necessary sin, merchants as an integral part of the city's economic life, and antiperistasis from the *Essays*.<sup>77</sup> The *Essays* went through a long series of editions with corrections and additions. The ultimate version of the work was published in 1625.<sup>78</sup> Italian translations were also available – one published in London dating back to 1618 and the other published in Venice in 1621.<sup>79</sup> Yet both of these were based on partial editions. While some topics, like the distribution of riches or a Latin verse from Lucan's *Pharsalia* about usury, may have been taken from the Italian translation, other references are more complicated. The discussion of the role of merchants in the state only appears in the 1625 version. The same holds true for the reference to religion being the chief bond of human society and for the entire essay "Of Usury" discussed by Giuseppe Veltri. This evidence suggests either that Luzzatto was familiar with the 1625 English edition – possibly someone had translated it for him – or that he had had earlier access to the Latin translation of the *Essays* included in the edition of Bacon's entire opus that came out in 1638,<sup>80</sup> the same year the *Discourse* was published.

Going beyond the discussion of single subjects, I would suggest that Bacon might have influenced Luzzatto on a far larger scale. I am personally inclined to think that Luzzatto was indebted to him and to his *Novum Organum* on a wider philosophical level involving relevant aspects of the whole set-up of the *Discourse*. I am specifically referring to Luzzatto's usage of Bacon's inductive method based on empirical experience in the discussion of the Jewish contribution to Venetian economy. Of course, there is a fundamental difference between this method and the scientific method that was inaugurated by Galileo and based on experiments that may be reproduced in a laboratory. Yet induction proves itself to be of effective help as far as the Jews are concerned in the *Discourse*.

In Bacon's words, induction is the only way to ascertain the truth of something by "elicit[ing] axioms from sense and particulars, rising in a gradual and unbroken ascent to arrive at last at the most general axioms."<sup>81</sup> In the *Discourse*, Luzzatto follows the direction of Bacon. In fact, he takes the profits the Jewish nation brings to the Venetian economy as a starting point of his argument and he illustrates them in detail:

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<sup>75</sup> Veltri, "Economic and Social Arguments," 26.

<sup>76</sup> For the chronology, see Bacon, *The New Organon*, XXXI.

<sup>77</sup> Veltri, "Economic and Social Arguments," 26.

<sup>78</sup> See Bacon, *The Essayes*, "General Introduction," paragraph 2, "The Evolution of the Essayes," XXXI–XXXVIII, "Textual Introduction," LIII–CXV.

<sup>79</sup> Francesco Bacone, *Saggi morali del signore Francesco Bacono*; id., *Saggi Morali di Francesco Bacchon*.

<sup>80</sup> Francesco Bacone, *Francisci Baconis Opera moralia et civilia*.

<sup>81</sup> Bacon, *Novum Organum*, 1:19.

However, since errors and fallacies often result from general examinations, while the truth always accompanies and follows [the focus on] details and differences, it seems to me appropriate here to turn to the individual case and to approach the calculation of the profits one can probably estimate that the government ordinarily receives annually from the [Jewish] Nation living sheltered in the city, leaving aside those dwelling in the other parts of the state.<sup>82</sup>

As I will show below,<sup>83</sup> Luzzatto uses Bacon's inductive method and empiricism in order to arrive at a general and logical conclusion in favour of the Jews, since this method can be very helpful if one has the possibility of working on concrete data, as is the case with economic figures. Therefore, the extent of Bacon's influence on Luzzatto is to be enlarged from specific references to the large-scale conception and method used in the *Discourse*.

## 4 Scepticism

Although the *Socrates* is usually considered *the* sceptical work by Simone Luzzatto, sceptical arguments and strategies already appear in his *Discourse*, and, if carefully analysed, they turn out to play a meaningful role in the reconstruction of the evolution and extent of his scepticism. This process of reconstruction cannot but start from some solid data, namely from the sceptical sources with which the author was familiar at the time of the publication of the *Discourse*.

### 4.1 Sextus and Pyrrhonism

In 1638, when the *Discourse* was published, Pyrrhonian scepticism was widely known. The main sources that conveyed information about it were the works of Sextus Empiricus, first translated in 1562 and 1569.<sup>84</sup> Luzzatto's familiarity with Sextus can be reasonably asserted since he quotes him directly and mentions him. His name appears in consideration XV, "Considering Various Objections Brought Forward by Cornelius Tacitus against the Ancient Jewish People, and Their Resolution,"

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<sup>82</sup> *Discourse*, 28r.

<sup>83</sup> See below, "Experience and Probabilism as a Guide for Human Action and Politics," 349–52.

<sup>84</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Sexti Philosophi Pyrrhoniæ hypotyposeson libri III, Quibus in tres Philosophiæ partes severissimè inquiritur... Interprete Henrico Stephano* (Parisiis: Uldrici Fuggeri typographus, 1562). A few years later, Gentien Hervet translated *Against the Logicians: Sextus Empiricus, Sexti Empirici viri longe doctissimi Adversos Mathematicos. Hoc est, adversus eos qui profitentur disciplinas Graece nunquam, Latine nunc primum editum Gentiano Herveto Aurelio Interprete – Eiusdem Sexti Pyrrhoniæ Hypotyposeson Libri Tres Latine nunc primum editi, Interprete Henrico Stephano – Accessit et Pyrrhonis vita, ex Diogene Laertio: ex vulgata interpretatione, sed multis locis castigata. Item, Claudii Galeni Pergameni contra Academicos et Pyrrhoniæ, D. Erasmo Roterodamo interprete* (Parisiis: Apud Martinum Iuvenem, 1569).

and in the above-mentioned consideration XVI. Luzzatto did not transcribe excerpts directly taken from any of Sextus's books, but he affirms having obtained information from them without bothering to give further bibliographical details:

1. The Egyptians, who were by no means barbarians but in fact passed on many doctrines to the Greeks, took their sisters for wives, and the Ptolemaic kings set an example [of this habit] to the common people. The Persians, who enjoyed dominion over Asia and the subjugation of Greece, passed to a higher level of turpitude, permitting sons to wed their own mothers. Chrysippus, the propagator of Stoic philosophy, claimed that he was responsible for the reform of the human race, and yet he remained indifferent in the face of such a detestable practice; on the contrary, by means of some of his reasoning he sought to describe it as almost honest, as one can read in the books of Sextus Empiricus.<sup>85</sup>
2. This is what Sextus Empiricus demonstrated, i.e. that every phenomenon and object is mixed and involved in five kinds of relations. Proceeding in his examination, he even demonstrated that it is almost impossible to grasp anything about objects other than their relation.<sup>86</sup>

The second passage quoted above is mainly focused on the philosophical problem of knowledge and is somewhat less interesting than the first. It suffices here to say that in these lines the sceptical argument according to which a thing can be known only in relation to something else is used to counter Plato's ideas ("firm and fixed substances").<sup>87</sup> This reference is less literal and more a summary of *Outlines* I:15, where Sextus argues that the objects of perception are relative to those perceiving them and that the objects of thought are relative to the thinker.

The first quote is much more interesting. Here, Luzzatto uses Sextus's argument about incestuous marriages in antiquity in the context of a political discussion, where he tries to respond to Tacitus accusing the Jews of being dissolute in their carnal impulses. He dismantles the baseless accusation by using Sextus's method of opposing argument against argument. Accordingly, he says that a people as civilised as the Egyptians or the Persians had far more dissolute habits than the Jews have ever had.

The "books" Luzzatto is referring to are the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* in Henri Estienne's translation. The above-quoted lines are an accurate periphrasis of the passage of the text, where Chrysippus is also mentioned:

Whereas intercourse with a mother is forbidden in our country, in Persia it is the general custom to form such marriages; and also among the Egyptians men marry their sisters, a thing forbidden by law amongst us. [...] Chrysippus says that intercourse with mothers or sisters is a thing indifferent, whereas the law forbids such things.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> *Discourse*, 60r.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 82r: "This thing [the relation] would be so feeble and slight that the Stoics, and after them the Nominalists, would negate its existence, [by saying that] it was chimerical and imaginary, or even better, verbal."

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* I:14,152 and 160.

In Sextus's times, the sceptical arguments aimed at the Stoic doctrines of knowledge were among the main targets of Sextus's scepticism. However, in Luzzatto's time, the method and arguments handed down by Sextus were used by philosophers against Aristotle and Aristotelianism. In consideration XV, Luzzatto displaces the focus from pure philosophical debate to the political arena and uses them to counter Tacitist arguments that are brought forward by the figure of Tacitus.<sup>89</sup>

Finally, if one were to say that Sextus was a relevant author for Luzzatto only on the basis of these two references, the argument would inevitably be lacking in precision and would therefore be weak. However, these references are relevant because they give the measure of the extent and aim of the usage of Pyrrhonian scepticism in the text. The Pyrrhonian method of opposing argument against argument is extensively used in the *Discourse* in order to undermine authority, especially human authority in the context of philosophical and political discussions. Luzzatto's main target is not only the outdated Aristotelian system, but also and above all political authority based on Tacitist arguments.

## 4.2 Montaigne

The presence of Renaissance and early modern authors and texts dealing with Pyrrhonian scepticism in the *Discourse* poses far greater interpretive problems than the classical ones. The only thing that can be reasonably asserted is that Luzzatto was familiar with the above-mentioned Gianfrancesco Pico's *Examen* (1520), even though he mentions him in the context of a different discussion about anti-Aristotelianism.<sup>90</sup> Yet in the *Discourse*, Luzzatto does not use scepticism with the same purpose as Gianfrancesco, namely to debunk philosophy and human reason and affirm the superiority of religion. Whether he does so in his later philosophical work, *Socrates*, remains, in my opinion, questionable. Officially, in the title of the work, he states that he intends to demonstrate "How feeble human intellect is when it is not directed by divine revelation." Afterwards, however, there are no further references to God, nor to divine revelation at all.<sup>91</sup> The entire work is focused on a philosophical discussion aiming at asserting the plausibility of a sceptical attitude, whose expediency is discussed in a long debate about practical and political life in the last forty pages of the work and immediately tested in the context of the reenactment of Socrates's trial. If a relevant influence from Gianfrancesco Pico and his usage of scepticism for religious and apologetic purposes were proved, an evalu-

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<sup>89</sup> As I will demonstrate below see Part II, Paragraph 3, "Debunking Authority: Argument against Argument," 345–49.

<sup>90</sup> See above, 319–20.

<sup>91</sup> As Ruderman already pointed out: Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 161–62.

ation of Luzzatto would almost inevitably confirm the general judgment of former interpreters who considered him a conservative.<sup>92</sup>

On the other hand, if a direct influence from Montaigne could be proven, the previous evaluation would have to be revised and improved. In fact, not only did Montaigne make the greatest contribution to the spread of Pyrrhonian scepticism among Renaissance and early modern intellectuals, he also and most importantly opened the doors to modernity and plurality by dismissing the old assumption according to which human thought and intellect supported by metaphysical reason was able to grasp reality in its entirety. Therefore, it is essential to establish whether Luzzatto had read him and how he had understood him. Did he read him as a fideist author, or a modern one? In fact, Luzzatto's familiarity with Montaigne is still a *vexata questio*. Some scholars have felt the presence of the Sieur de Montaigne in Luzzatto's pages, but they have not been able to bring solid evidence to give some consistence to their intuition.<sup>93</sup> Such consistence can be found first of all by starting from solid facts. First of all, the French language did not constitute an obstacle for Luzzatto, since in his time both the *Essais* and the *Apologie de Raymond Sebond* were available in Italian translation and had been printed in Venice.<sup>94</sup>

I have been able to trace two references to classical historical facts that are to be found in both Luzzatto's *Discourse* and in Montaigne's *Essais*:

1. Alexander, famed both for his victories and for the virtues of his soul, was so full of pity for Darius and his women, and yet he was so relentless towards Parmenion and Cleitus, who placed the rule of the world in his hands, and so cruel towards Callisthenes, his teacher. Julius Caesar, ferocious and inhuman in Pharsalia, was in contrast merciful towards Marcellus and indulgent towards Brutus, his murderer. Nero, a monster of humanity, at times regretted knowing how to write when he had to write death decrees for delinquents. And yet he did not mind exercising it [i.e. this prerogative] against his mother, and

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92 See Veltri, "Individual Responsibility," in this volume, 308.

93 See what David Ruderman writes about Luzzatto's *Socrates*: "Although there is no evidence to suggest that Montaigne's *Apology of Raymond Sebond* influenced Luzzatto's *Socrates*, there are several intriguing parallels between the two works." Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 178.

94 Michel de Montaigne, *Discorsi morali, politici e militari: del signor Michiel di Montagna: tradotti dal sig. Girolamo Naselli dalla lingua francese nell'italiana, con un discorso se il forastiero si deve admettere alla administratione della Republica* (Ferrara: appresso Benedetto Mamarello, 1590); id., *Saggi di Michel Sig. di Montagna*; id., *Apologia di Raimondo di Sebona saggio di Michiel Signor di Montagna nel quale si tratta Della debolezza, & incertitudine del discorso Humano Trasportato dalla lingua Francese nell'Italiana, per opera di Marco Ginammi* (In Venetia: Appresso Marco Ginammi, 1634). The first translation is something of an anthology based on the translation of passages from the original French. The Venetian edition prepared by Ginammi is more interesting, since it is a complete translation, followed in the space of one year by the edition of the *Apologie*. Furthermore, since both books had been published in Venice, it seems highly plausible that Luzzatto might have read them. Ginammi's press enjoyed remarkable success in that time as it published unusual and controversial texts. See Maria Napoli, *L'impresa del libro nell'Italia del Seicento* (Naples: Guida editori, 1990).

his teacher Seneca. He was a friend of virtue and learning, but he hated these attributes in others. For this reason, Lucan, the wittiest poet that ever lived, lost his life.<sup>95</sup>

2. To these people, that wicked saying of Lisander the Lacedaemonian would apply: “*To cheat boys with knuckle-bones, but men with oaths.*”<sup>96</sup>

The second passage about Lisander is not very meaningful. It appears in the *Essais* 2:18, where Montaigne discusses and condemns the most common vice of his time: lies. On the other hand, Luzzatto quotes it while discussing impiety, which is always accompanied by lies and credulity. Although he might have read the passage in Montaigne’s *Essais*, the contexts in which the quote is used are too different to constitute indisputable evidence.

However, when one moves on to examine the first passage, the result will be quite different. It is included in consideration XI, where Luzzatto tries to demonstrate that the human character is changing and unfathomable. In the essay “De l’inconstance de nos actions,” Montaigne returns to this subject and shows how contrary the human character can be:

1. Et qui croirait que ce fût Néron, cette vraie image de la cruauté, comme on lui présentât à signer, suivant le style, la sentence d’un criminel condamné, qui eût répondu: “Plût à Dieu que je n’eusse jamais su écrire,” tant le cœur lui serrait de condamner un homme à mort.<sup>97</sup>
2. Il n’est point de vaillance plus extrême en son espèce que celle d’Alexandre – mais elle n’est qu’en espèce: ni assez pleine partout, et universelle. Toute incomparable qu’elle est, si a-elle encore ses taches. Qui fait que nous le voyons se troubler si éperdument aux plus légères soupçons qu’il prend des machinations des siens contre sa vie, et se porter en cette recherche d’une si véhémence et indiscrète injustice, et d’une crainte qui subvertit sa raison naturelle. La superstition aussi, de quoi il était si fort atteint, porte quelque image de pusillanimité: Et l’excès de la pénitence qu’il fit du meurtre de Clitus est aussi témoignage de l’inégalité de son courage.<sup>98</sup>

The similarity between Luzzatto’s and Montaigne’s passages must not be based on a literal comparison. It is not a literal quote. The message conveyed by both authors is, however, very similar, and all the more so for the conclusion. Montaigne and Luzzatto seem to agree on the basic premise: the inconstant, even contradictory, characteristic of human nature. This premise is at the origin of their works, and in Luzzatto’s case it has relevant implications for the judgment of the Jewish people.<sup>99</sup>

Is it enough to affirm that Luzzatto had read Montaigne and understood him as a sceptical, modern author? I am personally inclined towards a positive answer,

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<sup>95</sup> *Discourse*, 36v–37r.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 67r.

<sup>97</sup> Montaigne, *Essais*, 2:1 “De l’inconstance de nos actions.”

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> For a full discussion of the issue, see below Part II, Paragraph 5 “The Verdict and the Probable Portrait of the Jewish People,” 352–56.

and I think that future research will rather confirm this answer by bringing further references to the surface than contradict it.

#### 4.3 Probabilism: The Sources

The problem of the sources and usage of the concept of the probable in Luzzatto's works is possibly more intriguing than the usage of Pyrrhonian sceptical strategies. In the *Discourse*, Luzzatto writes the following declaration of intent: "Political matters are full of alterations and contingencies, and in this Discourse, I intended that I would follow the probable and the plausible, just as a new academician would, and not as a mathematician who follows the absolutely demonstrable and undeniable."<sup>100</sup>

With these lines, Luzzatto positions himself and his Italian works under the influence of sceptical philosophy and, most significantly, he does so by explicitly evoking the image of the new academician as well as the concept of the probable and the plausible. He will only mention Sextus later on, without any explicit reference to Pyrrhonian scepticism. Is this because, as Charles B. Schmitt maintained, Renaissance thinkers did not distinguish between the two orientations and used the term *academici* in the general sense of sceptics *tout court*?<sup>101</sup>

Although the mention of the new academician can be found in Sextus's *Outlines* (I:226), I am more inclined to think that Luzzatto had been an attentive reader of Cicero's *Academics*. Cicero mentions the new academy clearly and plainly in *Academics* I:44–46, where he explains that the *academia nova* follows Arcesilaus's teaching according to which nothing can be known "the senses are limited, the mind feeble, the span of life short, and that truth (in Democritus's phrase) is sunk in an abyss." Therefore:

No one must make any positive statement or affirmation or give the approval of his assent to any proposition, and a man must always restrain his rashness and hold it back from every slip, as it would be glaring rashness to give assent either to a falsehood or to something not certainly known, and nothing is more disgraceful than for assent and approval to outstrip knowledge and perception.<sup>102</sup>

In the *Discourse* and the *Socrates*, Luzzatto seems to have assimilated this teaching and to have understood Cicero's academic scepticism as an invitation to hold oneself back from rashness, which is at the origin of false knowledge, and as an exhortation to follow probable opinions without assenting to them. At the same time, however, when one tries to evaluate precisely what Luzzatto means when he refers to the probable and the plausible, one finds what I would call an intriguing convergence, for lack of a better word, between Cicero and Aristotle. Cicero drew the con-

<sup>100</sup> *Discourse*, 30r.

<sup>101</sup> Schmitt, *Cicero Scepticus*, 8.

<sup>102</sup> Cicero, *Academics* I:44–45 See also Schmitt, *Cicero Scepticus*, 21–22.



cept of the probable from Carneades and translated the original Greek word *pithanon* into the Latin *probabilis*, and therefore as “persuasive.” Yet in the original Italian text, Luzzatto speaks of both “probabile et verisimile,” that is, “truth-like.”

Aristotle in his turn had also discussed the concept of *pithanón*, i.e. the probable, as an epistemological category.<sup>103</sup> As Stefania Tutino skilfully points out, for Aristotle the probable somehow stands in opposition to mathematical proofs. In fact, it can produce a kind of knowledge of human affairs that is different in nature from the absolute truth that issues from mathematical proofs and can produce scientific knowledge (*epistēmē*).<sup>104</sup> In the above-quoted lines, Luzzatto evokes the very same epistemological opposition: probable vs. absolute certainty, new academician vs. mathematician.<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, the Aristotelian definition of “probable” was taken as an authoritative source by early modern probabilists. Francesco Patrizi, a Humanist from Siena (1413–94) who also showed an interest in the *Academics*,<sup>106</sup> referred to the Aristotelian concept of *pithanón* and translated it with *vero simile* (i.e. truth-like).<sup>107</sup> I would suggest that all these sources converge in the *Discourse*.

As for the question of whether Luzzatto was able to make a distinction between academic and Pyrrhonian scepticism, it seems to me that he was. I do not need to point out here that current research into academic scepticism and the influence of the *Academics* in the early modern period has confuted Schmitt’s thesis about the almost absolute relevance of Pyrrhonian scepticism to the disadvantage of academic scepticism and also about the lack of differentiation between the two sceptical orientations.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, Luzzatto must have been aware of the fact that in his *Outlines*

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**103** See Aristotle, *Rhetoric* I:2 (1356b27–1357a7 and 1357a23–b23): “What is persuasive is persuasive to someone; and something is persuasive either because it is directly self-evident or because it appears to be proved from other statements that are so”; “A probability is a thing that happens for the most part – not, however, as some definitions would suggest, anything whatever that so happens, but only if it belongs to the class of what can turn out otherwise, and bears the same relation to that in respect of which it is probable as the universal bears to the particular.”

**104** See Stefania Tutino, *Uncertainty in Post-Reformation Catholicism: A History of Probabilism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 11–12. For the influence of Aristotle’s probable on Cicero’s idea of the probable, see *ibid.*, 15.

**105** An identification with Sextus’s mathematicians or professors (see the *Contra Mathematicos/Against the Professors*) can therefore be excluded.

**106** Schmitt, *Cicero Scepticus*, 49–50.

**107** Francesco Patrizi, *Della retorica dieci dialoghi* (In Venetia: Appresso Francesco Senese, 1562), 61a. The author reports Aristotle’s interpretation of Plato’s *Phaedro* where Plato intended the word *pithanón* as *vero simile* i.e. truth-like. Furthermore, the fact that the book was published in Venice may suggest that Luzzatto was familiar with it.

**108** Accordingly, see Carlos Levy, *Cicero Academicus. Recherches sur les Academiques et sur la Philosophie Ciceronienne* (Rome: École Française, 1992); Brian Inwood and Jaap Mansfield, eds., *Assent and Argument Studies in Cicero’s Academic Books* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Walter Nicgorski, *Cicero’s Scepticism and His Recovery of Political Philosophy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Plínio Junqueira Smith and Sébastien Charles, eds., *Academic Scepticism in Early Modern Philosophy* (Switzerland: Springer, 2017).

(I:226–231), Sextus had argued against the probable, since the sceptic lives without dogmas and therefore also without following the probable. Furthermore, the different contexts in which Luzzatto resorts to academic and Pyrrhonian scepticism, together with the precise technical language drawn from each of them, appear to confirm this fact. First, the sections in which he discusses the probable in both the *Discourse* and the *Socrates* are separate from those in which he dismantles knowledge and authority using Sextus's *tropoi*. Finally, he is very precise in his choice of technical terminology. It suffices here to report the several places of the *Discourse* where he refers to what is probable and therefore persuasive: “it would be not persuasive [argument],” “one can say, and even confirm as very probable,” “it is not persuasive,” “it is even more unpersuasive.”<sup>109</sup>

The relevance of the *Academics* to the *Discourse* is further confirmed by their being the starting point of Luzzatto's philosophical and political speculation, and especially in Cicero's appraisal of Socrates as the first philosopher who displaced the focus of philosophy from pure metaphysical speculation towards the exploration of ordinary life.<sup>110</sup> On the basis of Cicero's presentation, Luzzatto introduces Socrates in the *Discourse* as a master of civil life: “They say that the great master of civil life, Socrates, brought philosophy, which was wandering high up in the heavens, back into human society and that he opened the cities' gates to it.”<sup>111</sup>

This is the first time Socrates appears in Luzzatto's Italian works, and his presentation as a master of civil life is neither astonishing nor incompatible with his attitude and thought in the *Socrates*. In fact, in the very opening of the work, Luzzatto immediately affirms that Socrates had been judged the wisest of men by the Delphian oracle precisely because he knew that he knew nothing,<sup>112</sup> which is a reference to *Academics* I:16. Furthermore, throughout the dialogues in which he dismantles the speakers' arguments, he keeps to Cicero's formula of making no affirmation of his own, but refuting other people and saying that he knows nothing except just that.<sup>113</sup> Yet Socrates finds himself on trial not because of the affirmation of his ignorance, nor because of his conclusions in favour of the suspension of judgment, but because he decided to spread the suspension of judgment to other people. For this reason, he is accused of wanting to subvert human knowledge,<sup>114</sup> which after

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<sup>109</sup> *Discourse*, 39v, 41v, and 42r respectively.

<sup>110</sup> Cicero, *Academics*, 425: “It is my view and it is universally agreed, that Socrates was the first person who summoned philosophy away from mysteries veiled in concealment by nature herself, upon which all philosophers before him had been engaged, and led it to the subject of ordinary life, in order to investigate the virtues and the vices, good and evil generally, and to realize that heavenly matters are either remote from our knowledge or else, however fully known, have nothing to do with the good life.”

<sup>111</sup> *Discourse*, 35v.

<sup>112</sup> Luzzatto, *Socrates*, 109.

<sup>113</sup> See Cicero, *Academics* I:16.

<sup>114</sup> Luzzatto, *Socrates*, 111.

all is more a political accusation than a philosophical one. The parallel of wanting to subvert human knowledge as the populists attempted to do in the Roman Republic is already present in *Academics* I:14, and it is a polemical stance aimed at the academic attack on human knowledge.

At the end of this discussion, it can be reasonably stated that Luzzatto is indebted to the *Academics* because of his interpretation of Socrates as a master of civil life and at the same time as the philosopher who laid the foundations of scepticism. Nonetheless, I would suggest that in his usage of the probable as an epistemological category, he is possibly much more indebted to Cicero.

These remarks notwithstanding, it remains to be ascertained whether and how Luzzatto's probabilism is related to early modern probabilism.<sup>115</sup> It is usual to consider the Spanish theologian Bartolomé de Medina (1528–80) as the founder of early modern probabilism,<sup>116</sup> and his pupil, the Cistercian bishop Juan Caramuel (1606–82), as the one who mostly developed the version of it that was adopted as a moral theory by the Jesuits.<sup>117</sup> Nonetheless, it would now be difficult to identify the early modern probabilist or probabilists who influenced Luzzatto on the basis of traceable sources. I shall therefore make some general remarks in the second part of this essay without claiming a direct and demonstrable influence.

## Part II

### Philosophical Scepticism and Political Thought in Luzzatto's Italian Works

#### 1 The Problem of Knowledge at the Origin of the *Discourse* and the *Socrates*

In order to develop the defence of the Jewish people and of Socrates, Luzzatto must first of all analyse and eventually debunk the trustworthiness of the knowledge that common people have about the Jewish people in the *Discourse* and the reliability of human knowledge in the *Socrates*. In other words, the first problem he must confront is the problem of truth.

Already in his time, the historian Heinrich Graetz highlighted that sincerity and love of truth constitute an important thematic continuity and connection between

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<sup>115</sup> For the debate about the relationship between Cicero's idea of the probable and early modern probabilism, see Tutino, *Uncertainty in Post-Reformation*, 15 ff.

<sup>116</sup> See Tutino, *Uncertainty in Post-Reformation*, 39 ff.; Sebastian Simmert, *Probabilismus und Wahrheit: Eine Historische Analyse zum Wahrscheinlichkeitsbegriff* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2017), 21 ff.

<sup>117</sup> See Robert Aleksander Maryks, *Saint Cicero and the Jesuits: The Influence of the Liberal Arts and the Adoption of Moral Probabilism* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008).

the *Discourse* and the *Socrates*.<sup>118</sup> Knowledge is, or at least should be, the knowledge of truth. Luzzatto's idea of truth is already evident in the first pages of the *Discourse*, namely in the dedication of his treatise "To the Lovers of Truth." Luzzatto seems to make Aristotle's definition of truth his own.<sup>119</sup> Thus, truth is *invita*, i.e. independent from volitional activity because no one can escape the alternative between falsehood and truth.

In Luzzatto's time, however, the Aristotelian definition of truth had become problematic. Appearances can be misleading. This problem also concerns the Jewish people as a whole and the Venetian Jewish community in particular. Accordingly, he writes: "I have thought it improper that an inaccurate portrait should obtain greater patronage than the original ever achieved over a long period of time."<sup>120</sup>

The author opposes the inaccurate portrait of the Jewish people to the Jewish people itself, suggesting that the trustworthy source of knowledge concerning this people should not be the portrait, but the original. This pictorial metaphor is not a simple baroque rhetorical device. On the contrary, it underlies a severe criticism of the Aristotelian concept of truth, which is at the very core of the *Discourse* and plays a pivotal role in Luzzatto's thought. In fact, he is referring here to the sceptical argument aimed at the Stoic theory of general notions that can be gained from resemblance since their origin is something that stands before the subject who is attempting to acquire the knowledge. This argument, brought forth by Sextus Empiricus in his discussion concerning the standard by which objects are judged, draws attention to the gap between the external objects and their presentation based on sensory feelings that are apprehended and judged by the intellect. In order to make the criticism clearer, Sextus resorts to the example of Socrates's portrait: "Just as someone who does not know Socrates but has looked at a picture of him does not know whether the picture is like Socrates."<sup>121</sup>

At this point, he concludes, once the arguments in favour of or against the standards of truth are set up in opposition, they will all turn out to be plausible. This process leads to the suspension of judgment.

In modern times, Montaigne took up Sextus's above-quoted argument and wrote in the *Apologie de Raymond Sebond*:

Et de dire que les passions des sens rapportent à l'âme la qualité des sujets étrangers par ressemblance, comment se peut l'âme et l'entendement assurer de cette ressemblance, n'ayant de soi

<sup>118</sup> Graetz, *Geschichte*, 10:150–51.

<sup>119</sup> See *Discourse*, 3r n. 2 and annexed sources.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 3r.

<sup>121</sup> The whole passage reads as follows: "So then the presentation will be that of the affection of the sense, which is different from the external reality. [...]. And if this affection differs from the external real object, the presentation will not be that of the external reality but of something else which is different therefrom. [...]. Nor, again, is it possible to assert that the soul apprehends external realities by means of the affections of sense owing to the similarity of the affections of the senses to the external real objects." Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* II:7,72–74.

nul commerce avec les sujets étrangers? Tout ainsi comme, qui ne connaît pas Socrate, voyant son portrait, ne peut dire qu'il lui ressemble. Or, qui voudrait toutefois juger par les apparences.

"Who," Montaigne asks, "would want to judge on the basis of untrustworthy appearances?" This is the point that stands at the very core of the conception of the *Discourse*. Following Sextus, and possibly also Montaigne, Luzzatto's comparison puts into question the general notion of the Jewish people based on its inaccurate portrait, whose original, he implies, has remained unknown to the majority of his readers. Ignorance about the religion, culture, and customs of the Jews causes Christians to act wrongly towards them. In other words, Luzzatto names ignorance, understood as a lack of knowledge, as the origin of the misfortunes and evils of the Jews. This is a variation of the Maimonidean concept of evil, also understood as a lack and privation of knowledge of God and therefore of wisdom.<sup>122</sup>

Yet Luzzatto's above-quoted passage can and possibly must also be read from the point of view of academic scepticism inspired by Cicero. Through this lens, it sounds like a realisation that the portrait of the Jewish people is inaccurate because it is a product of a rash approach to it. Furthermore, this portrait does not produce knowledge, but only false and dangerous opinions.

Almost fifteen years after the publication of the *Discourse*, the metaphor of the painting resurfaces again in the *Socrates*. This time, however, it concerns human knowledge, which appears, to Socrates, as deceptive as a painting: "Human knowledge is like a well-executed scenographical painting, accurately adjusted to the rules of perspective, since it deceives the sight and appears as if it were far away, but if one gets closer to it, one realises that it is a flat surface."<sup>123</sup>

These words are uttered by Socrates himself almost at the end of his philosophical investigation. In comparison with the *Discourse*, the problem is enlarged here since it concerns human knowledge as a whole, which is deceptive and deprived of a solid foundation. In his self-defence, Socrates explains that after a long investigation and long debates with the most educated philosophers of his time, he has come to the conclusion that "the apprehended objects exist because our mind has attributed a form and an appearance to them."<sup>124</sup>

Once again, rashness has brought about the false belief of possessing a knowledge that is actually impossible to achieve. Once again, the only viable alternative is to resort to probable opinions which can guide human action for the time being, until something more comes to light.

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<sup>122</sup> See Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, trans. Maurice Friedländer (Skokie, IL: Varda Books, 2002), 267: "All the great evils which men cause to each other because of certain intentions, desires, opinions, or religious principles, are likewise due to non-existence, because they originate in ignorance which is the absence of God ... For the knowledge of truth removes hatred and quarrels, and prevents mutual injuries."

<sup>123</sup> *Socrates*, 341.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

In both of Luzzatto's Italian works, Pyrrhonian scepticism functions as a *pars destruens* of knowledge and authority, while the resort to academic scepticism and probabilism allows him to establish a *pars construens* where the probable can guide human action in practical as well as political life.

## 2 *Theatrum Mundi* and Sceptical Strategies

"Every renowned and generally accepted lie holds some seed of truth from which it originates and grows."<sup>125</sup> This is the premise and foundation of the entire set of arguments Luzzatto uses to dismantle Tacitus's lies about the Jewish people in consideration XV. Truth should be the main object to which intellectual research is devoted, yet in modern times, it has become mixed with lies. This is one of the points where Luzzatto's scepticism becomes modernised and he distances himself from ancient scepticism, focused as it was on the philosophical debate about epistemology. In the seventeenth century, scepticism extends beyond the philosophical arena and encompasses the multifaceted aspects of human life. This also happens in Luzzatto's works.

A close examination of the text will prove that the *Discourse* itself can be read as a stage on which Luzzatto is playing the attorney, the Jews are on trial but are also the object of a problematic knowledge, and the Christian public is the jury. The philosophers and politicians in their turn are briefly called on stage to play different parts. Accordingly, Aristotle's practical political advice is relevant, but his philosophical system must be put under scrutiny and eventually debunked. Tacitus is counted among "the earliest masters of civil government for his teachings on and experience in politics." Yet "when referring to the origins and customs of the Jews [...] he was so overcome with hatred for the Jewish religion and contempt for the Jewish Nation that he was eventually excessively neglectful in investigating their true origins and events from their history."<sup>126</sup> Therefore, it would be pointless to look for comprehensive coherence in the work, and not because Luzzatto was writing an apology and pragmatically using only the arguments he needed, but because he was familiar both with the theatrical approach to life and with human vagaries, and apprehending them with the ironical smile of *Democritus ridens*.

The whole structure of the *Socrates* features this same theatrical approach, where the author creates the theatrical illusion of an academy located in Delphi in the temple of Apollo whose main purpose is the reformation of human knowledge. Suddenly, a letter is found, written by human reason, which is protesting because human authority is keeping it imprisoned and preventing it from free investigation. Thus, the academy decides to open a box where everybody can report all the ab-

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<sup>125</sup> *Discourse*, 58v.

<sup>126</sup> *Discourse*, 57v–58r.

surdities that that could possibly put human doctrines in danger. As a consequence, someone accuses Socrates of wanting to subvert human reason, and the members of the academy decide to put the philosopher on trial. In Luzzatto's text, the trial is a representation that takes place on stage. On this stage, ancient and modern philosophers and poets appear with their doctrines and are mixed so that he can create the illusion of the process being new and real and at the same time taking place in a sort of dimension that is outside of historical time and space. It is possible that for the conception of the work Luzzatto took inspiration from the *Ragguagli di Parnaso* by Traiano Boccalini,<sup>127</sup> who created a similar theatrical illusion of an inn opened on Mount Parnassus where Apollo is the governor and the judge. Before him come many ancient and modern authors and politicians, whom he has to judge. In this way, Boccalini wrote a satire of Spanish power and politics. Luzzatto did not intend to write a satire, yet his irony emerges from Socrates's words whenever he recalls and discusses doctrines that are either obsolete or simply absurd. Furthermore, in the title of the work, the author labels it "a semi-serious exercise" (*seriogiososo*, literally "serious and facetious") and in so doing he prevents his readers from taking it completely seriously because it is only an exercise, as if he were suggesting that the final and ultimate version of the work was still supposed to appear. Nonetheless, the adjective "semi-serious" could also be a reference to the genre of the work, implying that a tragedy, such as the real trial of Socrates, becomes a comedy since it here finds a happy ending in which the philosopher's life is saved.

If, however, the theatrical illusion can result in a happy ending by means of the sceptical phrases "non-assertion" and "I suspend judgment," in the real and practical dimension of politics, suspension of judgment is insufficient. In the *Discourse*, Luzzatto must counter the inaccurate portrait of the Jewish people since appearances may not only be deceiving, but also and most of all dangerous to rely on. Who would want to judge or be judged on the basis of appearances? This is what Luzzatto felt about the Jewish people. This is the moment when sceptical reflection is activated. It intervenes precisely in the gap between *les choses et les mots*, i.e. the gap between the external thing and the (political) judgment formulated about it. As far as the arguments in defence of the Jewish people are concerned, scepticism is therefore understood as a reflection on language. The formulation of a judgment, or its suspension, stems from handling scepticism not only as a philosophical concept, but also as a linguistic literary tool. In Sextus's formulation, sceptical language becomes the expression of an internal affection. Sceptical phrases are "the

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<sup>127</sup> Traiano Boccalini, *Ragguagli di Parnaso*, Centuria Prima (in Venetia: appresso Pietro Farri, 1612); id., *Ragguagli di Parnaso*, Centuria Seconda (Venezia: Barezzo Barezzi, 1613); for a modern edition, see Traiano Boccalini, *Ragguagli di Parnaso e scritti minori*, ed. Luigi Firpo, 3 vols. (Bari: Laterza, 1948). See also Luigi Firpo, "Boccalini, Traiano," in *Dizionario Bibliografico degli italiani*, vol. 11 (1969), available online at [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/traiano-boccalini\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/traiano-boccalini_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) (accessed February 25, 2017).

announcement of a human state of mind which is apparent to the person experiencing it.”<sup>128</sup> The act of speaking does not necessarily involve the active formulation of a judgment, but the passive formulation of how a thing impresses the speaker without expressing an intellectual evaluation. To achieve this result, Luzzatto must first of all play down his own authority. He must try to oppose the inaccurate portrait of the Jewish people with something else which has to be more accurate, but also different in the way it is put into words and argued:

Therefore, with the smallest amount of talent that the Divine Majesty has granted me, I brought myself to compose a concise but truthful account of this Nation's principal rites and most commonly shared opinions, which are not in conflict with those that are universal. In performing this task, I tried with all my might, even though I belong to the same Nation, to abstain from any sympathy or passion that could make me deviate from the truth.<sup>129</sup>

This declaration of intent must not be read simply as an assertion of neutrality and honest accuracy, *sine ira et studio*. I am inclined to read it as a formulation made in a sceptical language. Everything Luzzatto will write about the Jewish people will not be mediated by an intellectual evaluation. Instead, it will be a passive formulation of how it appears to him and how it impresses him. He is the passive recipient of impressions (*kata to phainomenon*, “quid de quaque re videatur”) and he transmits them like a chronicler (*historikos*, “historico quodam more”) to his readers. The account can be a sceptical tool allowing its author to avoid the formulation of dogmatic judgments. In Sextus's formulation: “We simply record each fact, like a chronicler, as it appears to us at the moment.”<sup>130</sup>

What is true at the moment must be something that is unmediated. There then arises the next question: how to formulate this account? It must be formulated based on Sextus's strategy: “To every argument an equal argument is opposed.”<sup>131</sup> Therefore, in the pages of the *Discourse*, Luzzatto proceeds in his account by opposing his arguments to those that go against the Jewish people.

### 3 Debunking the Authority: Argument against Argument

As I have demonstrated above, the authority Luzzatto is attacking in the *Discourse* is essentially a political authority whose principles and actions are inspired by the

<sup>128</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* I:17, 203.

<sup>129</sup> *Discourse*, 5r.

<sup>130</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* I:1, 4. The Latin version Luzzatto must have read is the following: “Sed quid de quaque re nobis nunc videatur, historico quodam more narrantes exponere.” Sextus Empiricus, *Sexti Philosophi Pyrrhonianum hypotiposeon libri III*, 405.

<sup>131</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* I:18. The English word “argument” translates the Greek *logos*. The Latin version Luzzatto must have read is the following: “Omni oratio aequalis opponitur” (Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrrhonianum Hypotiposeon*, 53).



kind of Tacitism according to which religion – the Catholic religion, as it happens – must guide political action. This kind of political authority is extremely dangerous for the Venetian Jews. Therefore, Luzzatto tries to counter it by resorting to the sceptical strategy of opposing argument against argument.

To confirm this statement, I will switch to a discussion of consideration XV, “Considering Various Objections Brought Forward by Cornelius Tacitus against the Ancient Jewish People, and Their Resolution,” the longest in the *Discourse*. Questions have been asked as to why Luzzatto chose to discuss Tacitus’s arguments and who was possibly hiding behind him.<sup>132</sup> Abraham Melamed has given highly useful starting points for the understanding and evaluation of this consideration.<sup>133</sup> According to him, the focus on Tacitus’s slanders was unusual in Jewish apologetics, and Luzzatto was the first Jewish author to devote an entire discussion to him.<sup>134</sup> Furthermore, he demonstrates that this discussion is not really focused on the Roman historian himself, since Luzzatto is here giving a Jewish interpretation of late Renaissance Tacitism<sup>135</sup> and therefore he is not formulating apologetics, but engaging in a discussion about political thought.<sup>136</sup>

I would suggest that in the pages of consideration XV, Luzzatto’s sceptical strategy deployed to dismantle Tacitus’s slanders against the Jews is particularly relevant. I would even go so far as to suggest that this consideration should be regarded as a *virtuoso* performance of the strategy of argument against argument.

First of all, it must be noted that all seven slanders of which Tacitus accuses the Jews are related to customs and rites:<sup>137</sup> the adoration of a statue of a donkey in the Temple of Jerusalem; carnal dissolution; compassion for their fellow tribesmen and hatred for all others; the alleged adoration of Bacchus; the custom of abstaining from pork meat because of risk of leprosy infection; an inclination to superstition; and idleness and sloth. For the sake of brevity, I shall not dwell on all Tacitus’s slanders and Luzzatto’s counter-arguments, but only on the most substantial ones for the purposes of my essay.

The first slander, Luzzatto writes, concerns the consecration of a donkey’s head in the inner chambers of the Holy Temple of Jerusalem. He quotes Tacitus’s passage and then explains it:

That is, [he claims that] when the Jews were wandering the desert, a place deprived of water and therefore dominated by thirst, they eventually came upon a flock of wild donkeys. From

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**132** According to Ravid (*Economics*, 21–22), Luzzatto’s apologetic intents are directed against Senensis and Buxtorf.

**133** See Melamed, “Simone Luzzatto on Tacitus.”

**134** *Ibid.*, 152

**135** *Ibid.*, 144.

**136** *Ibid.*, 152.

**137** As a matter of fact, the Christian public in the seventeenth century was highly interested in the issue of Jewish customs, ceremonies, and rites. See Veltri, *Renaissance Philosophy*, chapter 8, “Ceremonial Law: History of a Philosophical-Political Concept,” 169–94.

this, Moses inferred that a spring must be near. Thus he followed [the flock] until he discovered the desired water. The water restored the people and quenched their thirst. As a consequence, and to remember such a propitious event, they consecrated an effigy or skull of [one of] these animals, which was ultimately preserved in the inner chambers of the Temple.<sup>138</sup>

With a move of a consummate strategist, Luzzatto mentions the fact that this slander has already been confuted by the Christian apologist Tertullian almost *en passant*, as if it were universally known and acknowledged.<sup>139</sup> Then, he adds that “the Scripture makes no mention of this event, which shows that the story is untrue,” as if he wanted to imply that one can obviously doubt the writings of a heathen historian, but not the word of the Scripture. Finally, he switches to the sceptical confutation of the slander.

First of all, it must be noted that Luzzatto’s counter-argument is introduced by and punctuated with sceptical phrases – “But let me tell you what my intuition suggests, in the form of a conjecture – without persisting in asserting it too tenaciously,”<sup>140</sup> “it could very well be,”<sup>141</sup> and so on. Then, he turns the alleged adoration of the donkey’s head into a custom based on a usage sanctioned and approved by Scripture: “I have observed in the Holy Scripture that many things such as the means and instruments of miracles or victories were commemorated and consecrated in holy places in memory of divine favours.”<sup>142</sup> He subsequently finds the origin of this custom in a biblical story:

It could very well be that the donkey’s head relates to Samson, the strongest of men and a distinguished leader of the Jews. Having defeated a thousand Philistines with a donkey’s jaw, Samson became extremely thirsty. He turned to God, and from the jaw sprang forth a great abundance of water, which he drank and which restored him, as recounted in the book of Judges, chapter 19. An effigy of a donkey’s jaw with water pouring from it was placed in the Temple in commemoration of this most valorous feat, where everything occurred miraculously and not by means of simple human strength.<sup>143</sup>

In Luzzatto’s interpretation, superstition plays no role, as Tacitus suggested. There is no adoration of a donkey’s head, but only the custom, approved by Scripture, of preserving objects related to Samson’s ancient glorious feat. This custom has possibly been misunderstood because of the ceaseless changes and upheavals of human fortunes: “Subsequently, after the fortune of the Jews had changed, that monument of glory became little more than a joke, mocked by foreigners, and it gave rise to the fable that donkeys had led the Jews to the source of water.”<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> *Discourse*, 58v.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*: “Tacitus’s lies about these events have already been identified by a number of sages, in particular by Tertullian.”

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 59r.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 59v.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 59r.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 59v.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

The entire argument is essentially sceptical since in Sextus's formulation, a custom is the "joint adoption of a certain kind of action by a number of men, the transgressor of which is not actually punished."<sup>145</sup> If opposed to another custom, law, or dogmatic opinion, there appears to be so much divergence in objects that "we shall not be able to state what character belongs to the object in respect of its real essence, but only what belongs to it in respect of this particular rule of conduct, or law, or habit."<sup>146</sup> The preservation of the effigy or skull of the donkey in the Temple is only a custom or habit, and as such it has no more and no less authority than the other customs. Furthermore, ancient scepticism encounters early modern scepticism when Luzzatto mentions the change of fortune that is among the main themes of the latter; it will suffice to think of the role fortune and its vagaries play in Montaigne's *Essais*.

To confute the second slander describing the Jewish nation as dissolute in its carnal impulses, Luzzatto uses the very same method. First of all, he points out that carnal dissolution is explicitly forbidden and punished in the Bible. Then, he mentions heathen customs and laws that purposely allow what the Bible forbids as carnal dissolution. This is the case with marriage between sisters and brothers, permitted in Egypt, or marriage between mothers and sons, permitted in Persia. As I have shown above, this is also the passage where Sextus is explicitly mentioned as a source in the *Discourse*.<sup>147</sup>

It seems pointless here to dwell on the confutations of all seven slanders. It is much more important to point out that this consideration is aimed at the confutation of authority, namely the much-reputed authority of Tacitus as a historian: "If the courteous reader has gained nothing from the aforementioned matters other than the knowledge that the simple authority of great men is not the real cement of truth, then he should be thankful for what has been said."<sup>148</sup>

Sextus's sceptical method of opposing customs to laws, dogmatic opinions, or other customs debunks an authority that is only and wrongly founded on reputation and celebrity. Even if they do not mention it explicitly, these lines of the *Discourse* are already aimed against the *ipse dixit* that human reason puts under attack in the *Socrates* published almost thirteen years later. Furthermore, in this confutation the Bible too plays a very important role, since Luzzatto opposes the exact knowledge and quotation from Scripture to Tacitus's inaccurate knowledge of the Jewish people and its customs and laws.

At the same time, however, Luzzatto continues to consider Tacitus one of the greatest practical statesmen, since "those authors who were most accurate on one subject could be extremely negligent with respect to another, and that the same

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<sup>145</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* I:14, 146.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.* I:14, 163.

<sup>147</sup> See 333.

<sup>148</sup> *Discourse*, 73r.

truth can be infiltrated by falsehood that tries to force its way into truth.”<sup>149</sup> In Luzzatto’s time, truth and lies are mixed, and one needs great accuracy to distinguish between them. The same can be said about human character, which can be very contrary and contradictory, careful while analysing one subject and negligent while dwelling on another. This is another sceptical argument Luzzatto will use in defence of the Jewish people in consideration XI, “Referring to the Difficulties in Describing the Customs of the Jews in General, and That Their Misdemeanours Could Easily Be Prevented.”

#### 4 Experience and Probabilism as a Guide for Human Action and Politics

The *Discourse* and the *Socrates* can ideally be divided into a *pars destruens* and a *pars construens*. In the *pars destruens*, Luzzatto debunks the reliability of knowledge and of the authority who tries to formulate a judgment based on it. True scientific knowledge – what Aristotle would call *epistēmē* – remains beyond human reach. At this point, however, Luzzatto would be entangled in all-encompassing doubt, preventing him from taking any decision or action. Yet in both works, adjusting one’s life to the criterion of *apraxia* – and therefore refraining from action in practical and political life – would be dangerous and even impossible. In fact, the shadow of the trial and the pending judgment of the Venetian Jews in the *Discourse* and of Socrates in the *Socrates* makes *apraxia* a non-viable option.

Therefore, here comes the *pars construens*: the resort to the probable. If well-founded knowledge remains unattainable, one must resort to probable opinions. What these probable and plausible opinions are, Luzzatto does not explicitly say in either the *Discourse* or the *Socrates*, but a definition may be obtained from an analysis of his usage of the concept.

I shall begin with the *Socrates*, since it is there that Luzzatto strives to outline what the probable is and is not. After long philosophical debates, Socrates finally concludes that human knowledge is nothing more than an illusion. Then he begins an examination of the criteria men should follow in their practical lives. Abiding by the criterion of the probable is the sole answer Socrates finds when faced with the vagaries of chance and fortune:

The observation of the uncertainty, the instability, the vicissitudes, and the unpredictable contingency of human affairs pushed me towards these considerations and thoughts. What kind of certain conjectures could I ever draw about our affairs? For they are brought about by our will that is steady only in following its own changing fickleness and is often guided and directed by the wild chance alone.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> *Socrates*, 338.

The only answer is to try to see something that approaches the truth. This is what Socrates says at the end of his discussion with Cratylus, after the impossibility of attaining knowledge has been finally agreed upon: “‘I therefore conclude,’ Cratylus said, ‘my reasoning. If we cannot know the authentic truth, like Argos Panoptes, we must be satisfied that we are just able to see something that resembles it, like one-eyed Polyphemus.’”<sup>151</sup>

This is what Cratylus can surmise about truth. Socrates agrees with him, but only up to a certain point. These lines introduce the search for this thing that resembles truth. The best possible candidate is the probable, which, in order to be properly handled, needs to be properly defined. But here, a difficulty emerges. As was the case with the inaccurate portrait of the Jews and with knowledge compared to a portrait that is deceptive precisely in its striving to be similar to reality, in the following lines Luzzatto resorts once more to the metaphor of the portrait to argue that the definition of the probable first and foremost excludes any attempt to resemble the truth:

But if I were asked about the degree of certainty the probable can arrive at, and if I were to answer the objection that truth is impossible to attain, how can one argue that the probable retains at least some resemblance to truth? For since the original to which truth is compared is hidden from us and impossible to perceive with our senses, there is no way we can state that the truth we have is similar to this original or corresponds to it in some way. A painter who does not know Pericles will never be able to paint his portrait.<sup>152</sup>

Once again, the problem of obtaining a portrait that is as close as possible to the original arises. Yet this original remains unknowable. Therefore, the probable itself cannot be known or defined. Such an attempt would immediately expose itself to the criticism of the sceptical method. The only thing Luzzatto can do is to report what the probable is not:

I exhorted my friends and family to follow the directions of the probable in the businesses of life. For the probable is neither obstinate nor quibbling. On the contrary, it is pliable to life events, it acts more than it talks, and even if in the vicissitudes of moral life...it does not draw close to truth, at least it does not incur the risk of unhealthy and mad obstinacy.<sup>153</sup>

The probable can only be sketched out by resorting to *empeiria*, i.e. experience of past and present things, as Machiavelli taught, and empirical knowledge, as Bacon taught. Therefore, it does not aspire to be fixed and imprisoned in the form of a knowledge that is valid for all eternity. It only offers a provisional knowledge, valid for the time being and able to deal with the necessities of the moment. In other words, this knowledge is under the control of time and human history. Accordingly,

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 323.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 395–96.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 394–95.

the probable cannot be defined and must be agreed upon by examining each and every individual case in each and every moment of human history. For this same reason, the probable eludes the control of the principle of authority:

Upon addressing questions of a philosophical nature or Scholastic debates, after challenging the reasons, it is customary to resort to the inexorable and occasionally invincible arms of authority. Thus, I believe that someone who is unable to confront the above-mentioned matters will attempt to argue using the weapons of example and authority. They [will] argue that if the Jews brought so many benefits, why did the most prudent princes and most sagacious republics exclude them from their states, as Spain, France, and England did, and as many cities in Germany as well as not a few in Italy have also done? To this question, one could respond that in political matters, an argument based on example carries little weight. Just as it is futile to turn to authority in mathematics, since such proofs are evident and certain by themselves, it is absurd to argue political matters on the basis of authority, because of the contingency and diversity of individual occurrences.<sup>154</sup>

Empirical knowledge also stands against general observations. It needs the accuracy Luzzatto pleaded for in consideration XV while discussing Tacitus's slanders. If, for example, one goes back to the *Discourse*, and more precisely to consideration VIII, "On the Detailed Calculation of Profits and Benefits Yielded by the Jewish Nation," it will be possible to see how Luzzatto handles the concept of the probable. First of all, as he already states in the title of the consideration, the discussion is focused on a *detailed* calculation, as he wrote in the above-quoted passage.<sup>155</sup> Thus, the probable alone cannot give trustworthy answers; in order to do so, it needs to be used together with experience of individual cases in the past and present. Then, Luzzatto enters into an analysis of the issue. In Venice, he says, there are about six thousand Jews; the tax raised from their food and clothing amounts to forty-eight ducats per year; the Jews employ around four thousand artisans for their personal services and those related to commerce, which amounts to thirty-two thousand ducats per year for the public revenue; they pay import-export taxes on the activities related to their commerce up to forty-seven ducats. To this, one must add the taxes on the provisions of the loan-banks – eight thousand ducats – and the obligation to provide lodgings for princes and ambassadors, amounting to eight hundred ducats per year. The sum of the annual public revenue is 205,000 ducats. To this, one must add occasional extraordinary taxes, eleven thousand ducats, and the tax of a quarter of the rent, six thousand ducats.

The final sum is 220,000 ducats, and here Luzzatto proudly states: "There are provinces, usually considered as duchies, that do not generate such high revenue."<sup>156</sup> The Jewish community is worth more than a province, and at far less expense. This is possibly the most important economic argument Luzzatto brings forward.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> *Discourse*, 86r.

<sup>155</sup> See above 332.

<sup>156</sup> *Discourse*, 30v.

<sup>157</sup> Accordingly, see also Ravid, *Economics*, 87.

In the following consideration, “On the Three Loan-Banks for the Poor Established by the Jews,” Luzzatto strengthens his argument by explaining that the Sere-nissima, in order to “favour the poor and to alleviate their conditions,”<sup>158</sup> ordered the Jews to open three loan-banks in which they had to practise a five per cent interest – “an amount so low that the expenses of leases on the buildings, managers, agents, and other requirements exceed the total of such low interest rates.”<sup>159</sup> In the light of all these facts and figures, one cannot but conclude that:

it is no less honourable for the Venetian prince to exercise protection towards the Jewish Nation than it is profitable, because of the aforementioned gains resulting from the entrance fees. These profits not only help to increase the treasury he must share with private citizens, but [his engagement in protecting the Jews is especially honourable] for bringing glory, which is the personal attribute of princes and great monarchs.<sup>160</sup>

Of course, Luzzatto is trying to protect the Jewish community, but he is not simply formulating, nor is he only bringing forward arguments in favour of the Jewish community; he is basing his argument upon a philosophical-theoretical foundation: the sceptical criterion of the probable, associated with and implemented by empirical data and experience.

## 5 The Verdict and the Probable Portrait of the Jewish People

After having debunked the false pretences of an authority that was claiming to be in possession of true and well-founded knowledge, and after having revealed his idea of the probable and the truth-like, Luzzatto tries to sketch a probable and truth-like portrait of the Jewish people. This portrait does not aspire to absolute and everlasting truth. It simply aspires to be plausible and probable, in such a way as to be considered reliable, but not ultimately authoritative or everlasting. Therefore, Luzzatto only says what can be said in his time and with his information.

From a practical and economical point of view, he has already demonstrated that Jews are useful, and for this reason he has been considered, with some amount of plausibility, the first Jewish thinker to make use of this concept.<sup>161</sup> It only remains to point out that the idea of the utility of the Jews, based as it is upon empirical data and credible and truth-like conclusions, is in itself something of a sceptical concept since it does not demand well-founded knowledge, but only probable opinions, and since it remains valid only for the time being, like the suspension of judgment.

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<sup>158</sup> *Discourse*, 32v–33r.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 33r.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 35v.

<sup>161</sup> See Pierre Birnbaum, ed., “*Est-il des moyens de rendre le juifs plus utiles et plus heureux?*” *Le concours de l’Académie de Metz (1787)* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2017), “Introduction,” 10–12.

What else can be said about the Jewish people with some amount of plausibility and truth-likeness? This is what Luzzatto asks himself in consideration XI, “Referring to the Difficulties in Describing the Customs of the Jews in General, and That Their Misdemeanours Could Easily be Prevented.” If one compares the length of the *Discourse* to what can be said about the Jewish people, one will find that the portrait Luzzatto sketches is very concise. The nation has no political independence and no military value, nor does it aspire to acquire them. The Jews do not care about the present course of things and they are unaware of their universal interests, nor are the majority of them interested in learning languages. Yet they preserve their faith and study the Bible with the greater scrupulousness and are held together by a great sense of solidarity. They are always submissive to the members of other religions and do not have a tendency towards serious or dangerous crimes.<sup>162</sup>

The concise terseness of this portrait has a practical historical reason and a philosophical foundation. From a practical historical point of view, it is difficult to say much more that can be held valid for the whole Jewish nation because, in Luzzatto’s own words, “dispersed as it is throughout the world, so that it is impossible to say anything certain and reliable about it.”<sup>163</sup> The Diaspora is at the origin of some differences between the Jews, who “are scattered around the whole world like a river running through a long stretch of countryside, whose waters receive an impression from the quality of the various lands through which they pass.” Jews do not become mixed with other nations; on this subject, Luzzatto is quite clear, yet

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**162** *Discourse*, 37v–38v: “Nonetheless, should someone still wish to investigate the universal habits [they share], one could say that they are a Nation of fainthearted, cowardly, and half-hearted spirit, incapable in their present situation of any political government, preoccupied with their particular interests, quite – if not completely – unaware of their universal ones. Their parsimony amounts to avarice. They greatly admire antiquity, and yet they are quite unobservant of the present course of things. Many of them are coarse in their customs, not often applying themselves to studying and to learning languages. According to other people they have a tendency to an exaggerated scrupulousness when observing their own laws. Against their flaws one could set down other qualities worthy of some observation: a firmness and inexpressible tenacity in the observance of their faith and a uniformity of dogma regarding their beliefs during the course of 1,550 years of dispersion in the world. This is a remarkable steadfastness, if not in encountering dangers then at least in bearing calamities. They have acquired an unrivalled knowledge of Holy Scripture and its interpretation. They can be characterised by human charity and hospitality towards any member of their Nation, even if he is an outsider and foreigner. The Persian Jew empathises and sympathises with the hardships of the Italian Jew. The distance between them causes no disunion among them, since they share the uniformity of religion. With regard to carnal vices, [they practise] great abstinence. They are careful and mindful to preserve their lineage, unmixed and uncontaminated. They are able to deal with any difficult business whatsoever. They usually display submission and respect towards anyone not belonging to their religion. Their errors and offences are almost always more spineless and wretched than atrocious. When it happens (as it often does with any nation) that one of their members commits a crime, and transgresses the edicts of the Prince, the remedy and relief are very simple.”

**163** *Ibid.*, 37v.



they “acquire different ways from the nations in which they settle.”<sup>164</sup> In fact, the idea of mixing is at the very foundation of consideration XI and gives a philosophical and anthropological explanation for the impossibility of saying anything certain and reliable about the Jewish people.

The idea of mixing in relation to human nature itself is already evoked in the first lines of the consideration and is attributed to Socrates:

After having thoroughly investigated himself and penetrating the most hidden recesses and obscure corners of his soul, he announced that he did not know whether there was but one animal dwelling in his soul or a multiplicity of different animals, wrapped around each other and entangled with themselves. Indeed, he found in himself the virtues, vices, excesses, and moderation – traits that the Stoic doctrine called animals – entwined with one another.<sup>165</sup>

Giuseppe Veltri has already highlighted the relevance of this passage, especially in relation to classical sources, namely the Stoic doctrine, ascribed to Chrysippus, according to which psychic processes are endowed with autonomous life and can therefore be considered animals.<sup>166</sup> Immediately thereafter, Luzzatto states: “For if one were to carefully consider the impulses of the soul, one would witness the appearance of a universal mixture of infinite things.”<sup>167</sup> This, i.e. the varied nature of the human soul, as Veltri has skillfully pointed out, is the real point Luzzatto wants to make, and for this same reason he evokes the Aristotelian catalogue of opposing emotions<sup>168</sup> and compares the human soul to a mosaic:

The internal image of our soul is composed of a mosaic that appears to form a single idea. Upon approaching it, however, one sees that it is made up of various fragments of cheap and precious stones put together. In the same way our soul is, for the most part, composed of different and discrepant pieces, each of which on various occasions takes a distinct appearance. Thus, the description of a single man’s nature and condition is a very arduous and difficult endeavour. It is even more difficult and arduous to relate all of his actions to a single rule and idea.<sup>169</sup>

As I have shown above, the reference to Nero’s and Alexander’s characters are very similar, if not actually drawn from Montaigne.<sup>170</sup> This means that Luzzatto is not simply interested in presenting a static appraisal of the human soul where the opposites co-exist, as happens in Aristotle’s catalogue. As an intellectual writing in the early modern age, he sees the human soul and the human character as full of nuances more than static opposites, very contradictory, changing, and even contrary. In

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 35v–36r.

<sup>166</sup> Veltri, “Individual Responsibility,” 295 and annexed sources.

<sup>167</sup> *Discourse*, 36r.

<sup>168</sup> See Veltri, “Individual Responsibility,” 296–97.

<sup>169</sup> *Discourse*, 37r.

<sup>170</sup> See above 335–36.

fact, I am inclined to think that the very same image of the mosaic and its tesserae as a metaphor for the human soul and character stems from Montaigne. He opened his *Essais* with the acknowledgement of the changing human nature and the impossibility of elaborating a well-founded judgment of it: “Certes c’est un sujet merveilleusement vain, divers et ondoyant, que l’homme: Il est malaisé d’y fonder jugement constant et uniforme.”<sup>171</sup> Accordingly, he says that human actions are like fragments – “Notre fait, ce ne sont que pièces rapportées”<sup>172</sup> – that we are all made of fragments in such a way that every moment must be considered on its own account – “Nous sommes tous de lopins, et d’une contexture si informe et diverse que chaque pièce, chaque moment, fait son jeu”<sup>173</sup> – and that finally each and every human action must be judged independently from the others: “A nous au rebours, autant d’actions autant faut-il de jugements particuliers.”<sup>174</sup>

Faced with such a nuanced heterogeneity, Luzzatto can only suspend his own judgment and state at the very end of the *Discourse* in consideration XVIII that the Jewish people is characterised by an “identity in essentiality.”<sup>175</sup> This identity in essentiality is the result of a historical process, the Diaspora, and, as Veltri points out, if one tries to understand what the essentiality is, one is only left with a history that has fashioned the Jewish people as it is.<sup>176</sup> About the substance of this essentiality, Luzzatto says nothing more, and, in my opinion, he does this intentionally, because nothing more can be said. Once again, as was the case with the dispute about Daniel’s messianic prophecy and with Socrates’s trial, sceptical silence is invoked. We cannot know anything more, we cannot say anything more, and therefore we cannot but suspend judgment.

From this philosophical and anthropological conclusion in favour of sceptical silence and the suspension of judgment stems the final judgment on the Merceria robbery as far as the Jewish nation is concerned. Only the few individuals involved in the crime, Luzzatto argues, must be judged, and always by keeping in mind that theirs is a petty crime not involving any danger to the preservation of the political integrity of the Serenissima. The Jewish people must be therefore absolved and be allowed to play its part in society and the world along with all the other peoples. Here, the metaphor of the mosaic and the fragments returns with a much more provocative comparison with Democritus’s atoms:

While the Stoics, renowned among ancient philosophers, dared to declare that the sun, the moon, and the other stars nourish and feed themselves from the vapour of our low, earthly sphere, in the same way Democritus and Leucippus ventured to say that this great and ornate

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171 Montaigne, *Essais*, 1:1 “Par divers moyens on arrive à pareille fin.”

172 Montaigne, *Essais*, 2:1 “De l’inconstance de nos actions.”

173 Ibid.

174 Ibid.

175 *Discourse*, 89r.

176 Veltri, “Identità nell’essenzialità,” 330–31.

world has indivisible and impassive particles among the elements that compose it. This opinion was condemned, but because the two philosophers asserted the casual coupling of small bodies, not because of the absurdity of the conception. Likewise, the Jewish Nation should be allowed to compare itself to Democritus's atoms in representing one particle of a very numerous population, and to a tenuous and earthly exhalation that contributes to paying tribute and maintaining public revenue.<sup>177</sup>

I am not inclined to interpret this passage as a display of knowledge of ancient theories of nature considered as a harmonious book that shows and demonstrates God's wonderful accomplishments.<sup>178</sup> This is another example of Luzzatto's rhetorical strategy. As usual, he begins with references to doctrines that are generally approved – the Stoic theory of nature – in order to switch to the real and possibly provocative point he wants to make. The real point here is the comparison of the Jewish nation to Democritus's atoms as “representing one particle of such a numerous population.” Atomism describes a world deprived of a vertical hierarchy of beings and instead based on a group of atoms that are all equals and arranged in a horizontal, non-hierarchical disposition. This is not a neutral erudite reference, since it has relevant political and social implications: all the peoples put on the same plane must be allowed to play their part in the world. Together with the sceptical resort to silence until we know more, the atomistic reference becomes the philosophical foundation for peaceful coexistence and tolerance of Jews in a Christian society.

## 6 Conclusion: Luzzatto's Probable Portrait

Luzzatto was not only a rabbi and an intellectual with multifaceted interests ranging from the Jewish sacred texts to secular philosophy and literature, with a special talent for mathematics.<sup>179</sup> Accordingly, as he himself states in the following passage from a letter he addressed to his master Jacob Heilbronn, he strived to find the time for both the Torah and “the other things,” as he eventually calls his secular studies:

For at the moment I am busy with other things. [...]. And I promise by the name of the Eternal that I am so absorbed in my other studies that I cannot leave them, not even for a short hour... And so help me God that after Sukkot I will make love to our holy Torah, as Your Honour will testify, since now I have no leisure of time.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> *Discourse*, 7r.

<sup>178</sup> See Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 157–58.

<sup>179</sup> Josef Solomon Delmedigo praised his knowledge of mathematics. See Benjamin C. I. Ravid, “Biblical Exegesis à la Mercantilism and Raison d'État in Seventeenth-Century Venice: The *Discorso* of Simone Luzzatto,” in *Bringing the Hidden to Light: The Process of Interpretation. Studies in Honor of Stephen A. Geller*, ed. Kathryn F. Kravitz and Diane M. Sharon (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 169.

<sup>180</sup> Simone Luzzatto, “Letter,” in Jacob ben Elchanan Heilbronn, ed., *Naḥalat Ya'aqov* (Padova: Gasparo Crivellari, 1622), 41v–42r (my translation).

Understanding the nature and subject of these “other studies” is one of the most demanding tasks for scholars who want to understand Luzzatto’s thought. The present essay has perhaps shed some more light on his studies and thought.

He was a rabbi and at the same time a philosopher, a Pyrrhonian sceptic as far as the challenge to authority was concerned and a probabilist as far as human action and politics were concerned. Much has been written about the possibility that he was a fideist whose Maimonidean vision involving the intervention of Providence still remained intact.<sup>181</sup> I am personally inclined to consider him nearer to those early modern probabilists such as Juan Caramuel. He belonged to a religious order, but at the same time he was a probabilist, convinced as he was that God, understood as the source and origin of the laws that governed humankind, remained unattainable. Yet the criterion of the probable implemented by the experience of ancient and contemporary human affairs allows these laws to be ceaselessly re-elaborated.<sup>182</sup> I think that this aspect is crucial and allows us to better understand Luzzatto’s activity as a rabbi and his philosophical thought. This remark also enhances and brings to the fore the coherence that links together the verdict about Daniel’s prophecy related by Morosini, the probable portrait of the Jewish people and its absolution as a collective, and the suspension of judgment connected with a resort to the probable as a guiding star in human life evoked in the *Socrates*.

Two last aspects deserve to be mentioned. The first is Luzzatto’s discreet “flirting” with atomistic theories,<sup>183</sup> confirmed by his mention of Democritus in the above-mentioned strategic point of the *Discourse* and his references to Machiavelli, who was one of the earliest transcribers of Lucretius’s *De rerum natura* and whose works were known both by Montaigne and Bacon. To Democritus/Machiavelli/Montaigne, Luzzatto is indebted for his ideas about chance, fortune, and necessity.<sup>184</sup>

The second and last aspect deserving to be mentioned is the episode related by René Pintard in his renowned study *Le libertinage érudit*, where he reports that Charles de Valliquierville, who came to Venice in 1646, went to visit the most learned rabbis of the time. Among them, there was “Rabbi Simon Luzzati.”<sup>185</sup> Valli-

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**181** See the discussion of Baer’s fideist interpretation of Luzzatto in Veltri, “Identity of Essentiality,” 7–8; Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, 183.

**182** Pastine, *Juan Caramuel*, 13–14.

**183** He would not be the only Jewish intellectual to be interested in atomistic philosophy: see, for example, Tzvi Langermann, “Yosef Shlomo Delmedigo’s Engagement with Atomism: Some Further Explorations into a Knotty Problem,” in *Jewish Culture in Early Modern Europe. Essays in Honor of David B. Ruderman*, ed. Richard I. Cohen, Natalie B. Dohrmann, Adam Shear, and Elchanan Reiner (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014), 124–33.

**184** Alison Brown, “Lucretius and the Epicureans in the Social and Political Context of Renaissance Florence,” *I Tatti Studies* 9 (2001): 11–62; *id.*, *The Return of Lucretius to Renaissance Florence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), especially 68–70 and annexed bibliography; Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the Renaissance Began* (London: Vintage, 2012).

**185** René Pintard, *Le libertinage érudit dans la première moitié du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Geneva: Editions Slatkine, 2000 [1943]), 370. Unfortunately, in this edition the author does not give further information about his source.

quierville was a complicated personality. Pintard describes him as a *frondeur*, a libertine with a penchant for conspiracies, who nonetheless used to follow the principles of Pyrrhonian prudence.<sup>186</sup> Furthermore, indulging the fashion of the time, he had some knowledge of Hebrew and the Kabbalah and was acquainted with Pythagorean doctrines.<sup>187</sup> Until now, the issues Valliquierville and Luzzatto may have discussed remain unclear; however what has recently been made clear are the relationships and cultural interchanges that took place in the ghetto between Christian intellectuals and eventually libertines and the admiration that Valliquierville had for Luzzatto.<sup>188</sup>

Perhaps not all has been said and done about Luzzatto, not yet. I would suggest that his interest in atomism and his relationship with libertines and members of the Accademia degli Incogniti are potential topics for further research.

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**186** See *ibid.*, 369–71.

**187** In the wake of Pintard's research, other scholars of Jewish studies mentioned the encounter, arguing that Valliquierville wanted some lessons about the Kabbalah. See François Secret, *I Cabalisti Cristiani del Rinascimento*, trans. PierLuigi Zoccatelli (Rome: Arkeois, 2001 [1964]), 130. Gershom Scholem suggested a less generous interpretation, since he considered Valliquierville a Christian kabbalist *tout court*, who was taught by Simone Luzzatto. See Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalistes chrétiens* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1975), 82. The episode is mentioned again in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* without any reference to the Kabbalah. It is merely stated that Luzzatto agreed to give some lessons to the French mystic Valliquierville. See Cecil Roth, "Simone Luzzatto," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 1st ed., 11:557, and *id.* and David Derovan, "Simone Luzzatto," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., 13:287. More recently, see Anna Lissa, "La zooantropologia scettica," 94.

**188** See Giuseppe Veltri and Evelien Chayes, *Oltre le mura del Ghetto. Accademie, scetticismo e tolleranza nella Venezia Barocca* (Palermo: New Digital Press, 2016) 121–46.

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# Glossary and Index of Names

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     of Esther, wanted to persecute the Jews;  
     possibly a literary figure based on the  
     Persian king Xerxes I, who reigned from  
     486 to 465 BCE 48v; 91v  
 Ahijah the Shilonite 89r  
 Albatanus (Albatano) *see* Al Battani  
 Al Battani (Abu ‘Abd Allah Mohammad ibn Jabir  
     ibn Sinan al-Battani al-Harrani al-Sabi’),  
     also called Albatanius in Latin (Born  
     before 858): Renowned astronomer and  
     author of several works, among them the  
     *Kitab al-Zij*, his most important work,  
     already translated into Latin  
     by the twelfth century 76r  
 Albo, Joseph (fifteenth century, Spain): Jewish  
     philosopher 79v  
 Alcmaeon 312  
 Aleppo 20v; 21r  
 Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE): King of  
     Macedonia, conqueror of Persia, Greece,  
     and Egypt, founder of an empire that  
     extended from India to Egypt 36v; 63v;  
     296  
 Alexandretta 21r  
 Alexandria in Egypt 17r; 18r; 20v; 39v; 78r  
     n. 342  
 Algiers 44v; 45r  
 Alighieri, Dante (1265–1321): Poet and author  
     of the *Divine Comedy* 83v  
 Amalekites 50r  
 Ambrogini, Angelo (Poliziano 1454–1494):  
     Florentine Humanist 297  
 Ammonites 50r; 50v  
 Amnon 61r  
 Amon 53r  
 Amos 53r; 53v  
 Amsterdam 19v; 20v; 91r  
 Anaxagoras (ca. 500–480 BCE): Presocratic  
     philosopher from Athens 36r; 295  
 Ancona (Marche of) 16v  
 Antoninus Pius (86–161 CE): Roman  
     emperor 75v; 75v n. 366; 283  
 Antwerp 20v  
 Apollo 60v  
 Appian (b. Alexandria, ca. 95 CE): Greek  
     historian who obtained Roman  
     citizenship 71v  
 Aquinas, Thomas 317  
 Arcesilaus 337  
 Aristophanes (ca. 450 BCE – ?): Greek comic  
     playwright 70r  
 Aristotle (384–322 BCE): Greek  
     philosopher 22r; 25r; 25v; 37v; 72v; 79r;  
     81r; 81v; 82v; 296–98; 315; 316–21; 328;  
     329; 334; 337; 338; 338 n. 104 and  
     n. 107; 341; 343; 349; 354  
 Asia 17v; 60r; 62v; 333  
 Averroes (Ibn Rushd, Cordoba 1126 –  
     Marrakesh 1198): Scholar of natural  
     sciences, theologian, and  
     philosopher 78v; 79r; 207 n. 359; 317  
 Avicenna (Ibn Sinā, 980–1037): Physician  
     and philosopher 83r  
 Babylon 52r; 64r  
 Bacchus 64r; 64r n. 277  
 Bachi, Riccardo 12v note; 250; 250 n. 36; 305;  
     306  
 Bacon, Francis 27r n. 81; 41 n. 147; 286; 289–  
     90; 292; 315, 330–32, 350, 357  
 Baer, Yitzhak 250; 299; 304; 305–7



- Balaam 89r  
 Barbaro, Giosafat, Iosafat, or Giosafatte (1413–94): Undertook voyages to Persia, Russia, Turkey, and India 10v  
 Barbary Coast: The northwest region of Africa including the present-day states of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia 9r; 9r n. 21  
 Basnage, Jacques 302 n. 92  
 Bathsheba 61v  
 Ben Abraham Anav, Zedekiah 245 n. 16  
 Ben Gershon, Levi (Gersonides, 1288–1344): Author of several biblical commentaries; his main work is the *Milḥamot Adonai* (*The Wars of the Lord*), which includes an astronomical treatise 27r; 27r n. 85; 79r–v; 317  
 Ben Israel, Menasseh 8v n. 19; 19r n. 55; 248; 303  
 Ben Nahman, Moses (Moses Gerondi, 1194–1270), born in Gerona (Catalonia): Philosopher, kabbalist, and biblical exegete 84v  
 Bergamo 86v  
 Bergonzi, Bartolomeo 251; 254; 257  
 Besançon 20v  
 Bizerte 44v; 45r  
 Boccalini, Traiano 344  
 Bodin, Jean 300  
 Bonaparte, Napoleon 274  
 Botero, Giovanni (Cuneo 1544–Turin 1617): always interested in politics his most successful book is *Della ragion di Stato* (1589), in ten books, conceived as an answer to Machiavelli's dissociation of ethics and politics 305; 327–28  
 Brandenburg 278  
 Brescia 86v  
 Brolo, Marco 247; 247 n. 21  
 Bruni, Leonardo 25r n. 76; 316; 317  
 Brutus, Marcus Iunius (85–42): Received an education in politics and philosophy; became involved in the plot against Caesar and participated in his murder 36v; 296; 335  
 Burgensis (Jewish name Solomon ha-Levy; Burgos ca. 1351 – ca. 1435): Rabbi of Burgos; called Pablo de Santa Maria after his conversion to Christianity 54v  
 Burgundy 20v  
 Busiris 65r; 65v  
 Ca' da Mosto, Alvise or Cadamosto (ca. 1429–83): Portuguese sea captain who explored West Africa 10v; 17r n. 47  
 Caesar, Augustus (63 BCE – 14 CE): founder of the Roman empire and first Roman emperor 32v; 62v; 71v; 326 n. 58; 330  
 Caesar, Germanicus Julius (15 BCE – 19 CE): Roman general 69r  
 Caesar, Julius (ca. 100/102–44 BCE): Roman general and dictator 36v; 47v; 60v; 296  
 Cagliari 37v; 298  
 Caligula, Caius (12–41 CE): Roman emperor 63r; 77v  
 Calleari, Gioanne 282  
 Callisthenes of Olinthus (ca. 370–327 BCE): Official historian of Alexander's expedition to Asia; contested the Persian court protocol envisaging the imposition of *proskynēsis* on the Greeks. Alexander had him arrested and sentenced to death after accusing him of being involved in the pages' conspiracy to murder him 36v; 296; 335  
 Calvary (mount of) 277  
 Calvin, John (1509–1564): Humanist and religious reformer 91r  
 Camozza, Giovanni Battista 297  
 Canaanites 50r; 55r; 277  
 Caramuel, Juan (Madrid 1606 – Vigevano 1682): scholar and member of the Cistercian order; considered one of the most important probabilists of the period 340; 357  
 Carmel (Mount) 59r; 66v  
 Cartesio *see* Descartes, René  
 Carthage 62v  
 Casaubon, Isaac 297  
 Caspian Sea 20v  
 Castile 57r; 91v  
 Cato, Marcus Porcius (Uticensis, 95–46 BCE): Follower of Stoic ethics, renowned for his honesty and defence of republican freedom 60v; 71r  
 Cattelan, Sabbadin 251–52; 254; 255  
 Cebà, Ansaldo 297  
 Chaldea 88v  
 Charles V 326 n. 55  
 Chrysippus (ca. 280 – ca. 205 BCE): Stoic philosopher 60r; 295; 333; 354

- Cicero (106–43 BCE): Roman orator and lawyer 11r; 11r n. 33; 47v n. 170; 70v; 72r; 72v; 316; 329; 337–40; 342
- Cincinnati 305
- Civitavecchia 16v
- Claudius (10 BCE – 54 CE): Roman emperor 63r
- Cleitus: one of Alexander's high officers; killed by the king during a banquet because of an argument while both of them were possibly under the influence of alcohol. See Plutarchus, *Vita Alexandri* 50–51 36v; 296; 335
- Conegliano, Israel 253
- Constantinople 11v; 20r; 37v; 56v; 90r; 298
- Contarini, Carlo 247
- Contarini, Gasparo 326
- Copio Sullam, Sara 297
- Cratander, Andreas 297
- Cratylus* (Platonic dialogue) 81v
- Cratylus: Attested as Heraclitus's follower and Plato's teacher by Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 3.1.6 81r; 81v n. 381; 328; 350
- Crema 86v
- Crescas, Hasdai Ben Yehudah (ca. 1340–1410/11): Catalan rabbi and philosopher, author of the *Or ha-Shem* 79v; 79v n. 366; 302 n. 93; 319–21
- Cusa, Nicholas of 299
- Cyprus (revolt of): Revolt against the Romans by the Jews of Alexandria and Cyprus from 115 to 117 CE (the last years of Trajan's reign) 39v
- Cyrus 300
- D'Angelo, Menahem 252; 254; 255
- Dalmatia 11v; 17v n. 48; 20r
- Damascenes 50v
- Damascus 20v; 37v; 48v; 53r; 298
- Damietta 20v
- Daniel, (prophecy of) 311; 311 n. 2; 312
- Daniello, Bernardino: Born at the end of the fifteenth century, author of a commentary on Dante's *Comedy* published posthumously in 1568 84r
- Darius I: Became king of Persia in 522 BCE; allowed the Jews to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem 63v
- Darius III: Became king in 335 BCE; last king of the Achaemenid dynasty. Defeated by Alexander the Great at the Battle of Issus (331 BCE). For Alexander's fair attitude towards Darius's women, see Plutarchus, *Vita Alexandri* 29.7–9 36v; 296; 335
- David 59r–v; 61r–62r
- De Medina, Bartolomé (Medina de Rioseco, León, Valladolid 1528–Salamanca 1580): Dominican and teacher of theology at the school of Salamanca. He is credited for being the founder of probabilism 340
- De Oviedo, Gonzalo Fernandez 277–78
- De Ribadeneyra, Pedro (1526–1611): Jesuit involved in many diplomatic missions for the Jesuit Order, author of the anti-machiavellian political treatise *Tratado de la Religion y Virtudes que debe tener el Principe Cristiano para gobernar y conservar sus estados contra lo que Nicolas Maquiavelo y los politicos de este tiempo ensenan* (1595) 327
- De' Rossi, Azariah 77v n. 347; 80r n. 368
- De Rossi, Giovanni Bernardo 302 n. 93
- De Valliquierville, Charles 357; 358; 358 n. 187
- De Vitoria, Francisco 278
- Della Casa, Giovanni 326 n. 55
- Della Mirandola, Gianfrancesco Pico (Giovanni Francesco Pico, 1469–1533): Nephew of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and the first editor of his works. Author of the *Examen Vanitatis doctrinae gentium et veritatis Christianae Disciplinae*, published in 1520 78v n. 356; 79v; 319–20; 334
- Della Mirandola, Giovanni Pico (Castello della Mirandola 1463–94): Familiar with Arab Aristotelianism, Platonism and Kabbalah. Befriended Elijah Delmedigo, who introduced him to Averroism, and Flavius Mithridates, who translated many books from Hebrew for him, some of which were focused on Kabbalah 80v
- Delmedigo, Joseph Solomon (1591–1655): Rabbi, mathematician and astronomer 246; 280; 356 n. 179
- Democritus of Abdera (b. ca. 460 BCE): Disciple of Leucippus of Miletus (fifth to fourth century BCE). Both are credited with having elaborated and propagated atomistic theory 7r; 7r n. 11; 26r; 26r n. 80; 285; 286; 314 n. 11; 337; 343; 355; 356–57

- Descartes, René 307 n. 121  
 Deuteronomy 25v; 51r; 52v; 54v; 61r; 74r  
 Di Trani ben Mali, Isaiah 245 n. 16  
 Diamante (or Lipet): daughter of Simone Luzzatto 279  
 Diaspora *see* dispersion (of the Jews)  
 Dinur, Ben-Zion 250  
 Diocletian (ca. 244–311 CE): Roman emperor 74v  
 Diodorus Siculus (80–20 BCE): Greek historian 22v  
 Dispersion (of the Jews) 38r; 39v n. 134; 74v; 88v–91r; 277; 285; 291; 294; 298; 300; 305–7; 323; 353; 353 n. 162; 355  
 Doryphorus 62v  
  
 Ecclesiastes 17r; 36r; 281; 296  
 Edirne *see* Adrianople  
 Edom *see* Esau  
 Edomites 50v; 56r; 56r n. 223  
 Egypt 9r; 17r; 20v; 33v; 34r; 52r; 53v; 54r; 65r; 65v; 70v; 72r; 78v; 79r; 268; 348  
 Egyptians 22v; 50v; 51r; 60r; 65v; 333  
 Elijah 66v  
 Elisha 48v  
 Elizabeth I Tudor: Queen of England from 1533 to 1603, daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn 13v; 13v n. 41; 287  
 Empiricus, Sextus (ca. second to third century CE): physician belonging to the Empiric school of medicine to whom we owe the best and fullest account of Pyrrhonian scepticism from his *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 60r; 82r; 320; 332–34; 337–39; 341–42; 344–45; 348  
 England 8v n. 19; 13v; 13v n. 40; 14v; 86r; 86r n. 405; 273; 287; 294; 351  
 Epiphanius of Salamis (ca. 315–403 CE): Anti-Gnostic author of the *Panarion*, in which some Gnostic sources are preserved 83r  
 Erizzo, Francesco 3r n. 1; 252; 253; 257; 284  
 Esau 50v; 56r n. 223  
 Estienne, Henri (in Latin Henrichus Stephanus, ca. 1528–1598): scholar, editor, and translator of Sextus Empiricus's works 333  
 Ethiopians 10v  
 Euphrates 47v  
 Euripides (480–406 BCE): Greek tragedian 47v  
 Europe 13v; 17v; 20v; 21r; 86r; 277; 283; 294; 305; 326  
 Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 265 – ca. 339/340 CE): Renowned for his historical works *Praeparatio Evangelica* and *Historia Ecclesiastica* 73v  
 Exodus 50v  
 Exodus (book of) 34v; 47v; 71r; 71v  
 Ezekiel (book of) 53v  
 Ezra (book of) 63v  
  
 Fabius (Quintus Fabius Maximus, ca. 275–203 BCE): Fought against Hannibal during the Second Punic War with the strategy of delaying the battles 36r; 296  
 Farissol, Abraham 302 n. 93  
 Ferdinand II (1452–1516): King of Aragon, who on 31 March 1492, together with his wife Isabella I of Castile, promulgated the Alhambra decree ordering the expulsion of the Jews from Spanish territories 57r; 87v; 88r  
 Ferrara 252; 253  
 Fez 91r  
 Florence 302 n. 28; 326  
 France 20v; 86r; 86r n. 405; 87v  
 Frances, Jacob 246  
 Freeman, Edward A. 298  
 Freher, Marquard 297  
  
 Galen 7v n. 14  
 Galilei, Galileo 5r n. 5; 6v n. 8; 7v n. 13; 331  
 Gaza 53r  
 Gehazi 48v  
 Genesis (book of) 33v; 290  
 Genoa 16v; 21r  
 Germany 9v; 13r n. 37; 37v; 86r; 90v; 271; 278; 294; 298; 351  
 Gerson, Issac 246  
 Ghetto of Venice 30r; 30r n. 97; 31r; 32r; 244; 247; 250; 251; 252; 254; 260; 264; 266; 267; 278; 297; 308; 328; 358  
 Giovanelli, Felix 305  
 Giustiniano, Marco 253  
 Gloria (or Ghele): daughter of Simone Luzzatto 279  
 Goliath 59r  
 Graetz, Heinrich 249; 307; 307 n. 121; 308 n. 124; 340  
 Granada (Moors of) 87v  
 Granadan nation/Granadans: The Muslim kingdom of Granada fell in 1492. In 1502,

- acknowledging the failure of the conversion policies, an edict ordering mass conversion was promulgated in Castile. In response, a revolt broke out in Granada and extended to the Alpujarras. The rebels appealed to foreign Muslim powers such as the Mamluk Sultan and the Ottoman ruler Bayacet II. In 1568–70, a second revolt broke out in the Alpujarras in response to a decree forbidding all customs and habits judged to be of Muslim origin. Therefore, Luzzatto's reference to the Granadans is possibly due to their revolts and their appeal to foreign powers as if they somehow had the stigma of treachery on them 39v, 40r; 291; 301
- Greece 8v; 17v; 60r; 74r; 88v; 333
- Greeks 20r; 60r; 68r; 73r; 74r; 74v; 78r; 90r; 333
- Guicciardini, Francesco 326
- Halevi of Ancona, Mahalalel 247
- Haman 91v
- Hamburg of Holstein 19v; 91r
- Ha-Nasi, Yehudah (latter half of the second and beginning of the third century CE):  
Compiler of the Mishnah 75v; 75v n. 336; 293
- Hannibal Barca (ca. 247–183 BCE): General who guided the Carthaginian expedition against Rome during the Second Punic War 36r; 69r; 296
- Hanno: Carthaginian general who fought against the Romans during the First Punic War (264–263 BCE) 62v
- Hanseatic League: One of the most ancient merchant organisations of the Middle Ages, founded in the fourteenth century by some northern German cities which wanted to protect themselves against the competitors from Holland and southern Germany. The League was dissolved in 1630 and replaced with a smaller alliance between Lübeck, Hamburg, and Bremen. It had four big trading posts: Novgorod, Bergen, London, and Bruges 13v; 13v n. 41; 14r
- Heilbronn, Jacob (XVI century): Italian Rabbi and mathematician 30r n. 94; 246; 281; 282; 356
- Heraclitus (Ephesus, ca. 500 BCE): Greek philosopher known for his doctrines asserting that things are constantly changing (perpetual flux), that opposites coincide, and that fire is the basic substance constituting the world 81r; 81r n. 376; 81v n. 381 and n. 382; 314 n. 11
- Herder, Johann Friedrich 303
- Herod 64v
- Hezekiah 59r
- Holocaust 305
- Holy Land 25v; 47v; 49v; 50r; 53r; 87r; 90r; 294
- Homer: Greek poet to whom the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are attributed 36v; 296
- Hortensius 60v
- Iamblichus (Chalcis, Syria ca. 245 – ca. 325 CE): From Chalcis in Syria: a pupil of Porphyry who brought about a systematic Pythagoreanisation of Neoplatonism 82v
- Ibn Ezra, Abraham ben Meir (1089–1164):  
Biblical exegete and poet 79v
- Ibn Verga, Shlomo 299; 304
- Idumea 53r
- Indies 88r
- Iphigenia 64v
- Irenaeus, (ca. 135/140 – ca. 200 CE): Author of the *Adversus haereses* focused on polemics against Gnosticism 83r
- Isabella I of Castile *see also* Ferdinand II 57r; 87v; 88r
- Isaiah 34v; 66v
- Isocrates (436–338 BCE): Athenian rhetorician 65r; 65v
- Israel (Land of) 245; 304; 306
- Israel (State of) 250
- Israel *see* Jacob
- Italy 9r; 12r; 13r n. 37; 14r; 14v; 16v; 17r; 19r n. 55; 21r; 33r; 45v; 86r; 91r; 250; 252; 271; 287; 294; 309; 325; 328; 351
- Izmir 17v
- Jacob 33v; 50v; 52v; 56r n. 223
- Jeremiah 52r; 63v; 77r
- Jeroboam 65r
- Jerusalem 58r; 63v; 66r; 77v; 90r; 324; 346
- Jesus of Nazareth 277; 311
- Jethro 54r
- Job 68v; 282
- Joseph 34r; 290

- Josephus (ca. 37/38 – ca. 100 CE): Priest (*kohen*) whose most important works are *Bellum Iudaicum* (*War of the Jews*), *Antiquitates Iudaicae* (*Jewish Antiquities*), and *Contra Apionem* (*Against Apion*) 58r; 58v n. 237; 63r; 63v; 73v; 75v n. 334; 76r n. 340; 77v; 78r–78v; 299
- Joshua 53r; 53v; 54r
- Joshua (book of) 59r
- Julian, Flavius Claudius (331–363 CE): Roman emperor also known as Julian the Apostate 74v
- Jupiter 67r
- Justin (100 – ca. 162/168 CE): Christian apologete 71v
- Juvenal (55–135/140 CE): Satirical Latin poet 62v; 65v; 70r; 70v
- Kabbalah 80v–81r; 84v; 282; 358
- Kabbalists 75v; 75v n. 334; 79r–81r; 82v–84v
- Karaites 84v–85r; 85r n. 402
- Keynes, John Maynard 306
- Kimḥi, David (ca. 1160 – ca. 1235): Grammarian and exegete from Narbonne (Provence) 53v
- King of Portugal *see* Manuel I
- Kings (book of) 48v; 64v; 66v; 277
- Korah: For the history of Korah's rebellion against Moses, *see* Numbers 16 39r; 291; 301
- Lampronti, Isaac 245; 246; 280
- Lattes, Dante 250; 306
- Lausitz 278
- Lebanon (mount) 36v; 296
- Leucippus (fifth century BCE): Generally acknowledged as the founder of the theory that the universe consisted of two different elements, the full or the solid and the empty or the void, in which both the solid atoms and the void were infinite 7r; 7r n. 11; 355
- Levita, Isacco 279
- Lipsius, Justus (1547–1606): Philosopher, author of political works, philologist, and antiquarian 84v
- Lisander the Lacedaemonian (d. 395 BCE): Spartan general 67r; 336
- Lithuania 85r n. 402; 90v; 294
- Livorno 14r n. 42; 16v; 18v; 19r n. 55; 21r; 45r
- Livy, Titus (59 BCE – 17 CE): Roman historian 68v; 76v
- Lombardia 16v
- Lonigo, Gasparo 256
- Loredan, Gian Francesco 28r n. 87; 248; 263 n. 61; 303
- Lucanus, Marcus Annaeus (Cordoba 39 – Rome 65 CE): Nephew of Seneca who criticised Nero's political system. Became involved in a plot against the emperor and received orders to commit suicide 32v; 37r; 41v; 60v; 91v; 296
- Lucretius, Titus Carus (d. ca. 55 BCE): Epicurean poet of the late Roman Republican era 64v; 357
- Lusitano, Shmuel Ha-Cohen di Pisa 281
- Luzzatto, Isaac (ca. 1540–1645): father of Simone Luzzatto 243; 244; 248
- Luzzatto, Isach: son of Simone Luzzatto 279
- Luzzatto, Leone 279
- Luzzatto, Moisé: nephew of Simone Luzzatto 245; 247; 279
- Luzzatto, Samuel 255
- Luzzatto, Shmuel David 278; 279 n. 16; 307
- Lycurgus: Spartan legislator 46r; 60r
- Lyon 20v
- Lysippus (b. 370 BCE): Greek sculptor, active during the Alexandrine age 6v; 284; 285; 322
- Machiavelli, Niccolò 3r n. 1; 6v n. 8; 18r n. 52; 18v n. 53; 285 n. 30; 293; 299; 300; 315; 321–26; 326 n. 55; 327; 329; 350; 357
- Maeotian Swamp, *Palus Maeotis*: ancient Latin name for the Sea of Azov 10v
- Maimonides (Cordoba 1135 – Fustat 1204): Physician, philosopher, and exegete; author of *The Guide of the Perplexed* 78v–79r; 79v n. 364
- Malachi 34v; 46v; 52v
- Malta 45r
- Manuel I (king of Portugal, 1469–1521): Cherished the hope of marrying the Spanish princess, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, and to unite Spain and Portugal. Accordingly, he decided first to expel the Jews and then to force them to convert in order to be able to keep them and profit from their talents. The Jews were thus turned into New Christians, or, as they were commonly labelled, Marranos 79v–88r

- Manuzio, Aldo 297  
 Marcellus 36v; 296; 335  
 Marcia: Wife of Cato Uticensis 60v  
 Mary I Tudor (1516–58): Queen of England, daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon 13v; 287  
 Maximinus Thrax (d. 238 CE): Roman emperor during the years 235–238 CE 74v  
 Mediterranean 10v  
 Meinecke, Friederich 326, 326 n. 55  
 Meldola, Samuel 253  
 Mendelssohn, Moses 303; 303 n. 97  
 Merceria 250–55; 283; 314; 355  
 Mesopotamia 48v  
 Messina 16v  
 Micanzio, Fulgenzio 40v n. 141; 256; 257 n. 48  
 Mint 30v; 244; 266  
 Mithridates (132–63 BCE): King of Pontus 62v  
 Moab 53r  
 Moabites 50r; 50v  
 Modena, Leone 243; 245; 246; 246 n. 19; 251; 252; 254; 258; 279; 279 n. 17; 281  
 Mohammed (ca. 570–632): Founder of Islam 76r  
 Mohammedans 87v  
 Montaigne, Michel de 36v n. 124; 67r n. 289; 313; 314; 315; 334–37; 341–42; 348; 354–55; 357  
 More, Thomas (1478–1535): English Humanist, statesman, and lawyer; author of *Utopia* 22r  
 Morea: Name of the Peloponnesus until the nineteenth century 17v; 17v n. 50; 45r  
 Morel, Frédéric 297  
 Morocco 91r  
 Morosini, Giulio (Samuel ben David Nahmias 1612–1683) scholar and polemicist who converted to Catholicism 248; 311–12; 313; 357  
 Morosini, Zuanne 256  
 Moscow 10v; 20v  
 Moses 3v; 3v n. 4; 34v; 39r; 46v; 53v; 54v; 58v; 59r; 61r; 66v; 69v; 71v; 76v; 77r; 77r; 79r; 82r; 84v; n. 346; 274; 290; 291  
 Müller, Max 298  
 Naaman 48v; 54r  
 Nahmanides (Moses ben Nahman 1194–1270): Born in Gerona (Catalonia); exegete, philosopher, kabbalist, and physician 84v  
 Nahmias, David 248  
 Nahmias, Isaac 248  
 Nahmias, Samuel *see* Morosini, Giulio  
 Naomi 52v; 53r  
 Naples 16v  
 Narenta: Italian spelling of Neretva, a river flowing through Bosnia and Herzegovina into the Adriatic Sea 21r  
 Nehemiah: nephew of Simone Luzzatto 279  
 Nero (37–68 BCE): Roman emperor 36v; 36v n. 124; 43r; 62v; 74v; 296; 335; 336; 354  
 Nicias (ca. 470–413 BCE): General and politician from Athens 68v  
 Nile 3v; 72r  
 Nineveh 53r  
 Noah 46v  
 Numa, Pompilius: Second king of Rome during the years 715–673 BCE who promulgated a calendar reform 76v  
 Numbers (book of) 61r  
 Osório, Jerónimo (Osorius): Translated Damião de Góis's *Crônica do felicíssimo Rei D. Manuel* (1566–67) into Latin and included it in his *De rebus Emanuelis gestis* (1586) 88r  
 Osorius *see* Osório, Jerónimo  
 Padua 42r; 246; 252; 256; 271  
 Palestine 305  
 Palontrotti, Melchiorre 22r n. 68; 248; 302  
 Paradise 20v  
 Parmenion (400–330 BCE): Issued from a noble Macedonian family, sentenced to death because Alexander suspected his involvement in a plot against him. *See* Plutarchus, *Vita Alexandri* 48.1–49.14 36v; 296; 335  
 Parthians 47v  
 Patrizi, Francesco (Siena 1413–1494): humanist known for his political writings. He was among the first ones to mention Sextus Empiricus and to show an interest in Cicero's *Academics* 338  
 Pentapolis 40r; 48v; 49r; 53r; 302  
 Pericles 328; 350  
 Persia 48v; 88v; 89v; 333; 348  
 Persians 60r; 333  
*Phaedo* (Platonic dialogue) 36r; 286  
 Phaleas (laws of) 25v, 316

- Pharaoh 3v; 33v; 34r; 268; 284; 290
- Pharsalia 36v; 296; 335
- Phidias (Athens, ca. 490/485 – ca. 432 BCE):  
Greek architect and sculptor 6v; 274; 275
- Philebus* (Platonic dialogue) 36v; 284; 285;  
322
- Philistines 50v; 59v; 347
- Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 BCE – 50 CE):  
Mentioned in relation to Caligula because  
he went to Rome as ambassador in 40 CE  
to intercede for his coreligionists, on  
which occasion he wrote the *Legatio ad  
Gaium* (*On the Embassy to Gaius*) 48r; 48r  
n. 172; 51v; 57v; 58r; 63v; 76r n. 340; 77v;  
77v n. 347 and n. 348; 78r; 78r n. 346,  
n. 347 and n. 349; 79r; 82r; 82v
- Phineas 61r
- Photinus: Eunuch who ruled the kingdom of  
Ptolemy XIII and tutor of the young  
Ptolemy XIV in ancient Egypt 91v
- Piacenza 21r
- Plato (429?–347 BCE): Greek philosopher 22r;  
22r n. 70; 36r; 36v; 43v; 72v; 81r–82r;  
82v; 296; 312; 314 n. 11; 316 n. 17; 329;  
338 n. 107
- Plotinus (204/5–270 CE): Philosopher generally  
considered to be the founder of  
Neoplatonism 82v
- Poland 37v; 80v; 85r n. 402; 90v; 293; 294;  
298
- Poliziano *see* Ambrogini, Angelo
- Polo, Marco (1254–1324): Well-known merchant  
and traveller who explored China 10v; 17v  
n. 48
- Polybius 284; 299
- Pompey the Great (106–48 BCE): Roman  
general and politician 92r
- Porphyry (Tyre, 234?–305? CE): Pupil of  
Plotinus, may have been Iamblichus's  
teacher 82v
- Porto, Abraham 279 n. 16
- Portugal 57r n. 232; 87v; 91v
- Possevino, Antonio (Mantova 1533 – Ferrara  
1611): Jesuit engaged in many diplomatic  
missions for the Jesuit order 327
- Propercius, Sextus 6v n. 8
- Protagoras: Greek sophist from Abdera 81r
- Proverbs (book of) 25r; 27v; 32v; 67v; 68r
- Psalmist 52v; 54r; 54v; 67r; 68r; 69v; 77r; 85r
- Ptolemy XII (d. 51 BCE): King of Egypt 91v
- Ptolemy: Completed the *Almagest* in the first  
half of the second century CE, which was  
the foundation of astronomical knowledge  
in both the Islamic world and Europe  
until the new discoveries of  
Copernicus 76r; 79r
- Pythagoras (ca. 570–490 BCE): From Samos;  
one of the most ancient Greek  
philosophers. None of his writings have  
survived 84v; 223 n. 398
- Pythagoreans 81r
- Quirini, Piero or Pietro Querini (Venice,  
fifteenth century): Undertook a voyage  
from Candia to Flanders in 1431–32  
together with Cristoforo Fioravanti and  
Niccolò de Michiel. They were  
shipwrecked and found rescue on one of  
the Norwegian Lofoten Islands 10v
- Rabbi Solomon *see* Rashi
- Rabbi Yehudah *see* Ha-Nasi, Yehudah
- Rabbis 55r; 75v–80r; 80v; 84v; 245; 246; 246  
n. 19; 254; 279; 279 n. 16; 280; 281; 282;  
293; 305; 311; 319; 357
- Ragusa 16v; 21r; 21r n. 66
- Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yizhaq Troyes, 1040–  
1105): Commentator on the Bible and the  
Talmud 53v; 54r n. 210
- Rehoboam 65r
- Rialto 245
- Rodrigo, Daniel (Rodríguez): Jew of New  
Christian origin from Portugal, who  
proposed turning Split into Venice's  
staple town on the eastern coast of the  
Adriatic Sea 19r n. 55
- Romagna 16v
- Romans 8r; 18v; 18v n. 53; 22v; 26r; 47v; 54r;  
55v; 57v; 60r; 62v; 64r; 69r; 71r; 73r; 74r;  
76v; 286; 322; 323
- Rome 18v; 42r; 43r; 60v; 88v; 92r; 250; 268;  
326; 330
- Romulus: Legendary character to whom the  
foundation of Rome is attributed 46r; 300
- Rotterdam 19v; 91r
- Roubey, Lester Walter 305
- Rovigo 281
- Rufus, Quintus Curtius (first century CE):  
Roman historian 67v
- Russia 90v
- Ruth 52v

- Saadia Gaon (ben Yosef, 882–942): Scholar of the Gaonic period and philosopher 78v
- Sacerdoti, Angelo 249–50
- Sadducees 75v n. 334; 84v; 85r
- Salonika 90r
- Samson 59v; 347
- San Marco (Piazza) 254; 255
- Saravel, Graziadio 254
- Sarpi, Paolo 40v n. 141; 256
- Saul 59v
- Saxony 278
- Scaliger, Joseph Justus (1540–1609): Philologist and antiquarian 76v; 76v n. 342
- Scaramella, Grassin 251; 252; 254; 255
- Scaramella, Isaac 252; 254
- Scipio Africanus (the younger, ca. 185/189–129 BCE): Roman general and politician; fought and defeated the Carthaginian army during the Second Punic war 70v
- Scola luzzatta 279
- Scola tedesca 279; 279 n. 16
- Sefer ha-Zohar (Book of Splendour)*: According to tradition, written by Rabbi Simon ben Yochai during the forty years that he hid from the Romans during the days of Bar Kokhba (132–135 CE); according to modern scholarship, written by Moses de Leon in thirteenth-century Spain 84v
- Seneca (Cordoba 4 BCE – 65 CE): Roman philosopher and preceptor of Emperor Nero 37r; 295; 296; 336
- Senego, Jacob 251
- Serra, Antonio (born in Cosenza): author of *A Short Treatise on the Wealth and Poverty of the Nations* (1613), credited for being one of the first scholars who dealt with the science of economics 288
- Shulvass, Moshe A. 250; 306
- Sicily 68v
- Sinai (Mount) 69v; 77r
- Socrates 22r; 22r n. 70; 35v; 35v n. 113; 36r; 37r; 69r; 70r; 72v; 81v n. 382; 290; 295; 296; 311; 312; 314; 316 n. 17; 325; 328; 329; 339; 339 n. 110; 340; 341; 342; 344; 349; 350; 354; 355
- Solomon 17r; 25r; 32v; 36r; 64v; 67v; 68r; 69r; 296
- Solon (ca. 640/30–560 BCE): Athenian legislator 46r
- Sombart, Werner 303; 304
- Spain 17r; 21r; 39v; 86r; 87v; 88r; 90r; 291; 294; 301; 351
- Spalato (port of) 17v; 17v n. 49; 18v; 19r n. 55 and n. 56; 21r; 21r n. 66
- Sparta 46r
- Spartans 47v; 60v
- Sporus 62v
- Strabo (20 BCE – 20 CE): Greek historian and geographer 71v
- Suetonius (second half of first century to first half of second century CE): Roman biographer and scholar 62v; 71v
- Syria 9r; 18r; 21r; 48v
- Tacitus (ca. 55 – ca. 120 CE): Roman historian 32v; 36v; 42r; 42v; 43r; 57r–73r; 296; 315; 319; 326; 326 n. 58; 329–30; 332; 333; 334; 343; 346; 348; 351
- Tamar 61r–v
- Tanais 20v
- Tartary (Latin *Tartaria*): According to Dante Lattes (*Ma'amar*, 157 n. 10), the equivalent of Russia and Central and East Asia 10v
- Tasso, Torquato (1544–1595): Italian Renaissance poet 88v
- Tertullian (second to third century BCE): Christian apologist 42v–43r; 58v; 347
- Theaetetus* (Platonic dialogue) 81v
- Theophrastus (ca. 371/70–287/86 BCE): Student of Aristotle and his successor as the head of the Peripatetic academy; renowned for his treatise on human characters (*Ethikoi Charaktēres*), which enjoyed great success in Luzzatto's time 37v; 297; 298
- Theseus 300
- Thucydides (ca. 460–395 BCE): Greek historian from Athens 20v
- Tiberius (42 BCE – 37 CE): Roman emperor 67r; 71v; 326 n. 58
- Titus (39–81 CE): Roman emperor 39v; 73v
- Toland, John 249; 249 n. 30 and n. 31; 250; 273; 303; 303 n. 97
- Trajan (53–117 CE): Roman emperor 39v; 74v
- Treves, Mosheh (or Moise) 279 n. 16
- Tripoli 21r; 44v; 45r
- Truman, Harry: President of USA 1945–1953 305



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Tyre 53r

United States of America 250

Uzelina (or Uzelina or Teghele): the wife of  
Simone Luzzatto 279

Valentinians: Followers of the Valentinian  
school, named after Valentinus (who was  
probably born in Egypt and taught in Rome  
between 136 and 166 CE); an important  
heretical Christian current between the  
second and third centuries CE 83r

Vellutello, Alessandro (first half of fifteenth  
century): Active in Venice in the first half

of the sixteenth century; his commentary  
on Dante's *Divine Comedy* was published  
in Venice in 1544 84r

Verona 21r; 42r; 253; 271

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Virgil (70–19 BCE): Roman poet, author of the  
*Aeneid* 9r; 69r; 72r; 92r

Weber, Max 303

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